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Leadership challenge ruled out

Buoyant Tory MPs to stick with Major

By Philip Webster and Jill Sherman

SENIOR Conservatives capitalised on improved party morale last night by formally ruling out any challenge to John Major's leadership before the next general election. The surprise move came after a series of strong question time performances by the Prime Minister exploiting the Harrier, Harman affair, and as the Labour leader himself acknowledged the gains the Tories had reaped from Mr Harman's decision to send her son to St Olave's grammar school in Orpington rather than to a local comprehensive.

The Conservatives were further boosted yesterday when a former Labour policy director suggested that Mr Blair's "stakeholder society" would cost billions of pounds, requiring heavy public sector investment and higher borrowing. The Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney, immediately declared that the "real cost of Labour" had been exposed and warned voters to watch their wallets.

De Mawhinney meanwhile warmly welcomed the Conservative 1992 Committee executive's decision to suspend the rules governing leadership elections to preclude a challenge in November. He said it was very sensible.

The decision was taken to prevent renewed speculation about Mr Major in the Conservative Party. Senior party members said last night that a challenge this year "would have been unthinkable", but that would not have stopped the press writing about it. In the meantime, the present rules are being reviewed, with many Tory MPs believing that there should be no mechanism at all for a serving Prime Minister to be challenged.

The 1992 decision is evi-

dence of the dramatic change of mood among Tory MPs, who are eagerly awaiting the next opinion polls to see what impact the education row has had on their rating. Although most accept that they face an uphill struggle to pull back Labour's lead, they believe that they have been presented with a clear target.

Mr Blair recognised that last night in his first big party speech since Mr Harman said she was sending her son Joseph to St Olave's grammar school in Orpington rather than to a local comprehensive.

Routine loyalty, orchestrated adulation: after a long interruption, the Tory Party is back on track

Matthew Parris, page 2

And the storm showed no sign of subsiding as emergency motions were tabled in three of the nine branches in her Peckham constituency demanding she resign from the Shadow Cabinet.

In his "meet-the-people" speech in Brentford, Mr Blair addressed the issue head-on as he attacked the Tories. "It was not a member of the Shadow Cabinet that lost people their jobs, their homes, their businesses," he said. "It was not an 11-year-old boy that raised their taxes. It was a 17-year-old Government that has made too many mistakes and told too many lies for the public ever to forget or forgive what they have done to our country."

He then sought to turn the hypocrisy charges that had been levelled at his party against the Tories, saying: "There is the party that says one thing and does another. They say one thing before the election and they do another afterwards. They are the risk. They are the danger. A Tory fifth term is the nightmare."

"Will you be paying to see a doctor? Will your child be taught in a class of 100? Will you be trapped in negative equity? Will you all be on contracts that mean you can be fired at a moment's notice without explanation?"

Mr Blair had earlier faced further embarrassment when the former Labour policy director Roland Wales admitted in the New Statesman that the "stakeholder society" would not come cheap. "In the housing sector alone, it is estimated that provision of adequate social housing will cost between £10 and £20 billion. How will Labour pay for it?"

Voters wanted more jobs, better schools and better health and housing, Mr Wales wrote. "Awaiting the fruits of growth is unlikely to be enough; a Labour chancellor will have to find the funds to start making good the chronic public sector investment gap, while calming the fears of the markets."

But last night party sources dismissed both his claims and his role in the party. "Roland Wales was left out of policy formation when he worked for the Labour Party and from what he said today you can see why," an official said. "He had no input whatsoever into policy making and, even if he wanted them to be, his views were not taken seriously."

Harman revolt, page 10



Margaret Webb and her husband Keith with JJ last night after the amicable settlement on the pup's future

Deal on custody ends dogfight

By Tim Jones

A TEARFUL and acrimonious battle over the ownership of JJ, a playful and potentially valuable Irish setter pup, was decided yesterday when a judge agreed it could remain with the couple who bought it.

But the six-month-old bitch, registered with the Kennel Club as Goldings Hellebora, will have to return in 18 months to where she was born to give birth to a litter. In a settlement which mirrors complicated divorce case access agreements, both sides will have the right to visit the dog when it is not with them.

The saga began last October when Margaret Webb, of Swindon, Wiltshire, was presented with the puppy by her children who had chubbed together £350 to buy it to help her overcome a serious illness.

Three days later, Biddy Evans, who with her husband George runs the Fosco Doghotel and Cattery near Cirencester, rang to say she had mistakenly sold them a

bitch instead of a dog and wanted it back.

Yesterday, minutes before the warring parties were due to continue their battle at Swindon County Court, their solicitors reached an agreement which Judge John McNaught doubted could have been resolved by litigation.

Once JJ comes into season after her second birthday Mrs Evans will have the right to

take her away for a week to be mated with a stud dog.

Then, eating only food approved of by Mrs Evans, JJ will spend eight weeks of her pregnancy with the Webb family, before returning to the Doghotel to give birth.

JJ will spend ten weeks there with her pups before being returned to Mrs Webb. If the mating is successful and produces at least three puppies, including one satisfactory breeding bitch which Mrs Evans will keep, the tug of love will end.

If JJ fails in her first mating to meet the terms of the settlement she will return to Doghotel for one more try. Mrs Webb will have the right to one of her puppies.

During her absence, both sides will have the right to go and see JJ and take their vet with them if they wish. On these visits, both parties have agreed "to act fairly and reasonably".

Because JJ's lineage and pedigree could make her litter very valuable the Webbs have



Reform of Nato urged by Chirac

President Chirac, on the first state visit to America by a French leader in 12 years, has proposed a transatlantic charter to reform Nato and place more responsibility for security on Europe.

In his address to a joint meeting of Congress, Mr Chirac called for a renewed partnership. He said American commitment, both militarily and politically, was still essential to the stability of a growing Europe, but he emphasised that Washington need not always play an active role. Solidarity was "the best security".

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Songwriters deprived of royalties

By Alexandra Frean, Media Correspondent

THOUSANDS of composers and songwriters have been deprived of income by inefficiency and poor management at the Performing Rights Society, which collects royalties on their behalf, a government report concluded yesterday.

The report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission found that the society, Britain's only licensing body for composers and songwriters, operated in a monopoly situation and against the public interest.

The MMC's year-long inquiry into the society was prompted by long-running complaints from both struggling and well-known composers, including Lionel Bart, who wrote *Oliver*, and the Irish rock group U2. The

Dublin band has started legal proceedings to challenge the society's right to collect royalties for live performances.

Under the live royalty system, introduced three years ago, the society records details of performances at 500 large venues and then uses this as a yardstick for all halls. Writers of classical and minority forms of music allege that this ignores many performances of their work in small halls.

The society, founded by a group of music hall composers in 1914, raises more than £150 million in royalties for its 29,000 members.

John Taylor, competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, said that the MMC report had found "evidence of inefficiency arising from deficiencies in corporate structure and management practices".

The MMC was "not convinced that the society's practice of exclusivity is so essential that no further exceptions can be allowed," he added.

A spokeswoman for the MMC said: "Lots of money that the society has been collecting has gone into administration, rather than to the artists."

The MMC report makes more than 40 recommendations, aimed largely at improving the society's efficiency and its accountability to composers and songwriters.

The Director-General of Fair Trading has now given the society four months in which to implement the reforms. Dominic McGonigal, per-

former and composer administrator at the Incorporated Society of Musicians, which represents composers, welcomed the findings. "Their administration costs got up to 20 per cent of what they collected. We regard this as high and would like to see it reduced to 12 to 15 per cent."

Terri Anderson, a spokeswoman for the society, said that over a third of the actions proposed in the report had already been met.

John Hutchinson, who was appointed chief executive of the society last November, said: "Publication of the report will add a spur to the total strategic review of the business, which is planned for 1996."

UFO 'buzzed' airliner at Manchester airport

By Harvey Elliott, Air Correspondent

A BRITISH Airways passenger jet had a close encounter with an unidentified flying object while landing at Manchester airport, an official report disclosed last night.

The Boeing 757, with 60 people on board, was overtaken at high speed by a wedge-shaped craft as the plane descended through 4,000ft on the final stages of a journey from Milan.

Captain Roger Wills reported that the UFO, which was emblazoned with small white lights and possibly a black stripe down its side, flashed silently down the side of the jet so close that his co-pilot, First Officer Mark Stuart, involuntarily ducked as it went by.

There was no sound and no wake but both pilots were so concerned that they filed a formal "airmiss" report. The Civil Aviation Authority launched an investigation, the fourth such incident since 1987, and after a year-

long inquiry concluded yesterday that they could find no likely explanation. The three previous reported sightings also baffled the CAA experts.

The incident happened at 6.48pm on January 6 last year with the aircraft just above the clouds and visibility at least ten miles. Then air traffic controllers had the following conversation with Flight 5061.

B737: "We just had something go down the right hand side, just above us very fast."

Manchester: "Well there's nothing seen on radar. Was it an aircraft?"

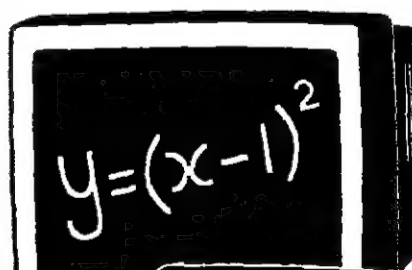
B737: "Well, it had lights. It went down the starboard side very quick."

Captain Wills and First Officer Stuart are certain that the object was solid and not a balloon, a model aircraft or even a military "Stealth" aircraft which the captain had seen before and would have recognised.

Both pilots should be commended for their courage in submitting a report, the investigators said.

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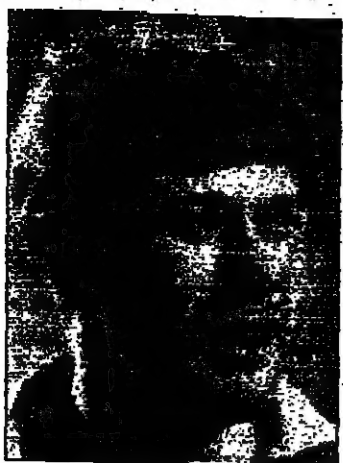
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Footballer jailed for butting opponent escapes ban



Ferguson served six weeks in prison for the offence

By FRANCES GIBBS
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Everton footballer Duncan Ferguson yesterday won his legal battle to overturn a 12-match ban for head-butting another player. The ruling could pave the way for more sporting bodies to be challenged in the courts.

A judge has ruled that the Scottish Football Association's disciplinary committee acted beyond its powers in punishing the £4-million striker for an offence that happened nearly two years ago when he was playing for Rangers. Ferguson served six weeks of a three-month jail sentence for the assault.

Lord MacLachlan said the pun-

ishment should be lifted in a judgment released yesterday at the Court of Session in Edinburgh.

The successful judicial review in the Scottish courts is thought to be the first in Britain against a sporting body. Courts in England and Wales — which have taken a more restrictive view of the boundaries of judicial review — do not have to follow it. But lawyers believe it will have influence.

Edward Grayson, a sports law barrister and author of *Sport and the Law*, said: "Sports bodies have always been held to be non-public bodies, although they do have public functions. There have been a number of complaints against sporting administrative bodies, including the Aga Khan against

the Jockey Club over the disqualification of his winning racehorse, Alyssa, and the Football Association over its establishing of a premier league. But they have all failed."

Mr Grayson said perhaps the English courts would follow suit and there could be a rash of similar challenges to the decisions of sporting bodies.

Ferguson head-butted John McStay, a Raith Rovers player, during a match at Ibrox in April 1994. Ferguson's lawyers argued at a court hearing earlier this month that the SFA's disciplinary committee had not complied with the rules in imposing the 12-match ban and so had no powers to do so. The lawyers said that under

the association's rule book, the committee could impose punishment only in exceptional cases of a player's misconduct. This punishment had to be "additional"; it could be imposed only where the player had been booked by the referee.

But as Ferguson had not been punished by the referee during the game for the offence, there had been no original punishment and so the committee could not impose an additional one, his lawyers said.

The SFA opposed the argument. But Lord MacLachlan said in the conclusion of his judgment yesterday that the committee had acted ultra vires in its attempt to deal with Ferguson's conduct "in an

incident which was not reported by any of the match officials and in respect of which there was no scale penalty incurred."

"It follows that the severe censure and 12-match suspension which they imposed were invalid and of no effect." He said he would therefore rule in favour of the player.

Blair Morgan, Mr Ferguson's solicitor, said that the outcome was the end of a long nightmare for the player. "He is delighted he is able to resume his playing career. If the decision had gone against him, he would potentially have missed the next seven games."

"He is back to playing and back to match fitness. A different result today would have been a setback.

He can resume his career with Everton and Scotland. He is exceptionally pleased, it is the end of a very unpleasant period of his life."

Joe Royle, the manager of Everton, said he was delighted that Ferguson's ban had been lifted. "We are all delighted for Duncan, the club and the fans," he told Radio City in Liverpool. "Let's just get on with the football now."

"It has been hanging over his head and we are delighted. We don't want to say too much more apart from that because the thing has dragged on for so long and we want to keep it as low-key as possible."

Footballer banned, page 40

Part-timers killed in explosion were wrongly told boy was trapped in upstairs room

Two firemen die after going back into empty house

By RICHARD DUCE

TWO part-time firemen died inside a blazing house yesterday after wrongly being told that a young boy was trapped inside. Stephen Griffin and Kevin Lane were killed when a sudden explosion wrecked the terraced house in the former mining village of Blaenau Gwent.

They had already brought out one five-year-old boy — who later died — but then went back inside believing that his younger brother was trapped.

Terry Glossop, Gwent Chief Fire Officer, said: "There was no one else in the house but these two firemen did not think for a minute of their own safety before going back into the building. We are all dreadfully shocked and saddened."

Other members of the fire crew, who witnessed the deaths of their colleagues, are to be offered counselling. They were in tears yesterday as they stood outside the charred shell of the two-bedroom house on a new housing estate at the edge of Blaenau.

Mr Griffin, 42, a married hospital porter with two children,



The wrecked house in which three died

and Mr Lane, 32, a factory worker, who leaves a wife and eight-year-old son, both lived in the village. Blaenau residents are planning to set up a fund to help the families of the two men.

Both men, who earned a £1,500 annual retainer, were called out at 6am to tackle the fire which broke out at the house where Catherine Harford, a single mother in her 20s, lived with her two sons, Daniel, five and Joshua, four.

The deaths of the two part-time firemen takes the number of firefighters lost to 20 since 1990. There are 14,792 retained firefighters in England and Wales, who, apart from their retainer, receive £10.50 for the first hour of an

incident and £5 an hour for subsequent hours.

Mr Griffin's widow Margaret said last night: "He was dedicated to the job. He knew the risks involved. He was on call last night and went out as normal last night but he never came back."

Flame flew at half past yesterday over the borough council offices as an investigation was launched into how the fireman died. It appeared that a neighbour believed Joshua was still inside the house but he had escaped with his mother. The two firemen, wearing breathing apparatus and carrying a hose reel, went back into the house in search of the boy.

As they climbed the stairs an explosion threw them backwards into the sitting room which was already burning fiercely. The men died in spite of their colleagues' efforts to save them.

Mr Glossop said: "The whole thing is a tragedy, but the worst aspect of all was that the information they were given was wrong. They acted in good faith and thought they were trying to save a life."

Bernard Aspinall, the lead-



The Blaenau fire crew last summer showing Stephen Griffin, back row, left, and Kevin Lane, front row, right

er of Blaenau Gwent Borough Council, paid tribute to Mr Griffin, whom he knew socially. "He was a genuinely nice guy, an ordinary family man. The same goes for Kevin. They were just ordinary guys doing a job they valued."

At the village fire station colleagues of the dead firemen were still on duty yesterday. The station, which until yes-

terday had never lost a firefighter, normally has a full complement of 12 part-timers, operating a single appliance. Chris Brown, the full-time station officer, said: "If there is a call out today we will respond as we always do. The men are dedicated to the job."

David Bishop, Mr Lane's brother-in-law, said: "Kevin was devoted to the fire service.

When he joined it was a new venture in his life. He had discovered some way he could help people." Annette Edwards, a neighbour, said Mrs Harford had been asleep in the sitting room with Joshua when the fire broke out. Daniel was trapped upstairs.

"She was in such a state of shock that she just sat there staring ahead. The firemen

were incredibly brave."

Daniel, a pupil at St Mary's Roman Catholic school in Brynmawr, was brought out by firemen but died despite attempts to revive him. Evelyn Wilce, the school's headmistress, said: "The staff are deeply shocked and saddened by this terrible tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families."

Request for a waitress was sexual prejudice

By STEPHEN FARRELL

A HOTELIER was found guilty yesterday of discriminating against men for saying he wanted to hire a waitress. John Tatum was taken to an industrial tribunal for sex discrimination even though he eventually hired a man.

Mr Tatum, 47, made the passing remark to a jobcentre official after becoming tired of unkempt men turning up for interviews at the hotel he owns in Sandown, Isle of Wight. The official reported his comment and the Equal Opportunities Commission decided to take action. He will not be fined.

The tribunal in Southampton heard that Mr Tatum had telephoned the Shanklin Jobcentre last March to withdraw his advertisement for staff after receiving a number of unsuitable applicants. Rachel Badman, the official, said he told her: "I have had several scruffy men with rings through their noses or covered in tattoos. What I want is presentable females."

Mr Tatum told the tribunal he had been unhappy with the quality of applicants from the jobcentre. "There was one man they sent with dirty fingernails, bells hanging from his ears, who came in shouting across the hallway: 'I've come for the job, mate.'"

Egyptian wine kills British tourist

By STAFF REPORTERS

A BRITISH holidaymaker fell into a coma and died after drinking three glasses of Egyptian red wine contaminated with methanol.

Charlotte Common, 55, a widow, was staying in an apartment near Cairo with two friends when she bought the bottle of Egyptian Cabernet Sauvignon from a supermarket. She drank it with a meal alone in the flat. The next day she was taken by friends to a hospital in Cairo but lapsed into a coma.

Mrs Common, from Washington, Tyne and Wear, was flown home by air ambulance but never regained consciousness and died on January 9.

Yesterday Pamela Denis, who is still at the Abu Keesem apartments where Mrs Common fell ill, said: "We are very upset. I have been a friend for 20 years. The wine was bought from a local supermarket which is very popular with the British Embassy."

Methanol can be used as a cheap substitute for alcohol. Several people have died from drinking adulterated Egyptian brandies and gins. A notorious wine scandal in



Charlotte Common: fell into coma in Cairo

Italy in 1986 involving methanol claimed 22 lives. Methanol becomes dangerous at levels of more than 1g per litre. It is metabolised in the body to formaldehyde and formic acid, both of which are toxic.

In the past the United States Embassy in Cairo has warned tourists not to touch any Egyptian alcohol. The Foreign Office said Mrs Common's death appeared to be an isolated incident.

Although Egypt's may be the world's longest-established wine industry, it is also one of the worst. Hugo Duménil, of the International Wine and Food Society, said: "From what I have heard, it is not surprising Egyptian wine has poisoned someone."

Mrs Common's family, who were at her bedside when she died, said they were investigating the circumstances of her death.

Farmer told to return antiques to listed house

By ROBIN YOUNG

A FARMER claimed yesterday that a High Court decision ordering him to return a magnificent carillon clock and three huge chandeliers to a country mansion would make it unsafe for anyone to buy furniture from a listed building.

Hev Kennedy, of Bridgnorth, Shropshire, bought the French baroque clock and three ornate chandeliers from a previous owner of Leighton Hall, Welshpool, a Grade II* listed Victorian neo-Gothic mansion built in 1851 for John Naylor of Liverpool, a banker.

The hall, commanding a view of Powis Castle, cost Naylor £2 million at the time. It boasts castellations, towers, gargoyles and mullioned windows. The building has been largely unused since the early 1980s, when it was briefly used as a school.

After Mr Kennedy bought and removed the clock and chandeliers in 1992, Montgomeryshire District Council issued enforcement notices requiring their return. The notices were upheld by John Redwood, then Welsh Secretary, in 1994 on the advice of a planning inspector that the

pieces were fixtures and not fittings.

In a judgment given in the High Court yesterday Mr Justice Ognall rejected a further appeal by Mr Kennedy and confirmed that he must return the ornate pieces within six months. Mr Kennedy was also ordered to pay costs.

"This is the first time a chandelier has been declared part of a listed building," Mr Kennedy said yesterday.

"These are not even part of the original decor or the architect's design. They were installed by the owner after the house was built." He said the clock, which weighs several tonnes, was a free-standing item made for exhibition.

The court was told that the clock was adapted to Naylor's specifications in 1855 and decorated to harmonise with its surroundings in the hall's entrance tower.

The man who owned the hall when Mr Kennedy bought the pieces had it repossessed by the National Westminster Bank. The present owners, two Manchester metal brokers, are converting it into two large flats and an office.

Traffic offender banged to rites

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

A MOTORIST who angrily bumped another driver's car at a toll booth has been sentenced to attend church.

An American court ordered Raymond Bachelor, 30, to worship regularly for three months after he was convicted of nudging the car of a woman who took a long time to find her handbag.

The court is not yet convinced of Bachelor's conversion. The case was held last month and he was told to return with documentary proof that he had honoured his sentence. This week Bachelor presented a premature letter of "proof" to the court. It has been rejected. Tom

Cuomo, the court administrator, said yesterday: "It had no letterhead and had very few details."

The letter was signed by a Rev John Cantrell but no clergyman of that name appears to exist in the Newark area. "We're not too sure the letter is from a minister," Mr Cuomo said. "Anyone could have written it."

At the original hearing at Saddle Brook Municipal Court, New Jersey, Judge Nicholas Nasarenko asked Bachelor: "Do you go to church?" Bachelor, of Newark, who faced jail or community service after being charged with criminal mis-

chief, replied that he attended as frequently as he could.

Judge Nasarenko: "Well, your minister is going to find out who you are. You're going to be a regular visitor." The judge said that he wanted Bachelor to grasp the error of his ways and he hoped that by listening to a clergyman he might learn to control his temper.

The American Civil Liberties Union criticised the sentence. Ed Martone, head of the union's local office, said that it was ludicrous and possibly unconstitutional to use religion as a sentence. "I'm sure most religious leaders don't think church

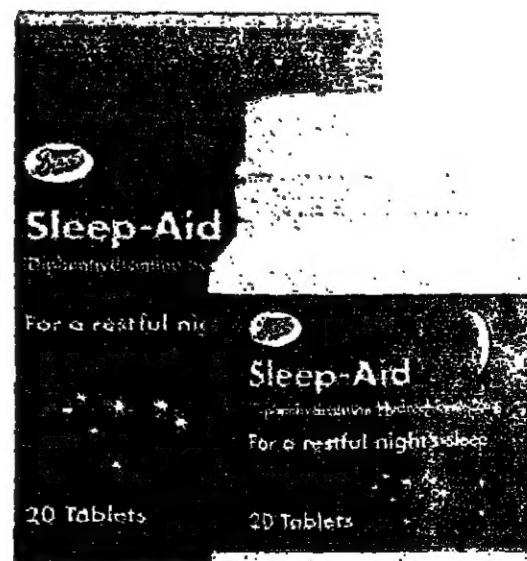
is an alternative for jail," he said.

Mr Cuomo said that Bachelor had appeared "very happy" when he heard the sentence. He was also fined \$455 (£305).

It is not the first time that Mr Nasarenko, who is a Russian Orthodox, has handed down an imaginative sentence. In November 1994 he ordered a man to cut off his ponytail as a condition to dropping an assault charge.

Last week a New York judge ruled that drugs suspects had a right to run away from police because officers were widely seen as "corrupt, abusive and violent."

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Looking forward, Apple is positioning itself to take advantage of information industry trends with the delivery of Copland, the code name of our next-generation operating system, and products based on the PowerPC microprocessor, the Newton® platform and Pippin™ technology — the television-based, affordable multimedia platform and Internet browser.

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President and CEO
On behalf of Apple employees worldwide

e-mail address: AppleForever@apple.com

Royal troubleshooter promoted

Top job for man who sold Queen double glazing

By ALAN HAMILTON

MEN in grey suits are taking over the world. In Queen Anne's time, the Keeper of the Privy Purse was her favourite Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. From next August, the romantically titled post as head of the present Queen's money will go to a former senior partner in the accountancy firm KPMG.

Michael Peat, 46, has already made a brisk and bustling impression on the Queen's counting house during his four years as her director of finance, imposing savings and a degree of business efficiency hitherto unknown in the red-carpeted corridors of monarchy. The Queen yesterday announced his promotion to Keeper of the Privy Purse, Treasurer to the Queen, and Receiver General of the Duchy of Lancaster, the most senior financial post in the Royal Household.

When he takes over in August, Mr Peat will assume overall responsibility for the financial running of the Queen's household, her private estates, stables and studs. He succeeds Sir Shane Blewitt, 63, who is retiring and who came to the Royal Household after a career in the Irish Guards and the City. Day-to-day financial affairs will be handled by two deputies.

Mr Peat first worked for the Queen on secondment from the giant City accountancy firm founded by his father. His decision to join her full-time in 1990 coincided with the Royal Household taking over the annual £20 million budget for the occupied royal palaces from the Department of National Heritage.

He demonstrated how far the Royal Family has moved from the days of Queen Anne in February 1993 when he gave unprecedented television interviews explaining the Queen's decision to pay income tax. "The Queen is a very pragmatic person. I have to say that her expenditure is not

Police are investigating an accident involving the Duke of Edinburgh after a motorist reported whiplash injuries. The Duke was driving a Range Rover, which hit a Mercedes that had stopped at a zebra crossing. The accident happened in Brandon, Suffolk, on Wednesday — the day after *The Sun* published part of a telephone call involving the Duke.

extravagant," he said. Since then Mr Peat has more than earned his £116,000 salary, plus performance bonus and an apartment in Kensington Palace, by making substantial savings. By installing double glazing, for example, he has saved more than £3 million over the past four years on the heating bill for Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. His target is to reduce the annual maintenance costs of the palaces to £15 million by the year 2000.

Figures released on the orders of the Commons Public Accounts Committee last year show that Mr Peat managed to cut the Queen's electricity bill by 9 per cent on the previous year, her gas bill by 17 per cent and water charges by 53 per cent. The public opening of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle produced £4 million towards the castle's restoration after the 1992 fire.

Mr Peat has also been busy with the Civil List, which provides an annual grant of £7.9 million to the Queen for her public duties and the running of her office. Since Mr Peat took over, the list has built up a surplus of £16.9 million, from which the taxpayer will benefit when the list is renegotiated for a further ten years in 2001.

The job, however, has brought its own problems for the low-profile financier. Labour MPs criticised the

£400,000 which was spent on refurbishing the apartment before Mr Peat moved in. Buckingham Palace, however, pointed out that the Old Etonian contributed £450 a week towards the cost of the flat. Similar properties in the area, however, would fetch a weekly rent of £2,000.

In royal family finances, the big winner is still the Treasury. Total costs of monarchy, from the Queen's flowers to the Royal Yacht, are estimated at £50 million a year. Last year the Crown Estates, traditionally handed over to the Government at the beginning of each reign, delivered to the Chancellor of the Exchequer a profit of £94.8 million.

Some rising costs, however, have evaded even the cold unblinking eye of Mr Peat. Last year the cost of the Queen's congratulatory telegrams to centenarians rose from £40,000 to £101,000. Not even accountants can prevent people from living longer.



Sid Shaw in his shop. He is expanding into bedspreads, curtains and shirts

Presley trader keeps on rocking

THE first round of the fight between a small businessman and the Elvis Presley empire over who has the right to produce the singer's souvenirs ended yesterday with a victory for the entrepreneur.

The Trade Marks Registry, part of the Patent Office, based in London, provisionally allowed Sid Shaw to continue producing his *Are You Lonesome Tonight?* knickers, *Jailhouse Rock* ties and Presley soaps branded with a portrait of the "King". Jack Soden, chief executive of Elvis Presley Enterprises, had objected to Mr Shaw using the name Elvis in his "Elvis Yours" merchandise. Mr Soden secured an injunction in 1987 preventing Mr Shaw from selling his souvenirs at Graceland, Presley's Memphis home.

Mr Shaw, who has a shop in Shoreditch, east London, argues that Elvis Presley Enterprises does not have sole rights to represent the singer. He has been fighting for the right to produce Presley memorabilia for 13 years. He said yesterday he would continue with his plan to expand into Presley curtains, bedspreads and shirts.

TOMORROW



Maxwell: Peter Jay's verdict

"His only success is the avoidance of disaster..."

So wrote Peter Jay in a memo to his successor after three and a half years as Robert Maxwell's "Chief of Staff". Read on tomorrow for Jay's recollections of the "pre-moral giant pachyderm" and his verdict on two new books on Maxwell's life and death.

ON THE BOOKS PAGE, ON SATURDAY



Michael Peat, a far cry from Queen Anne's days when the Keeper of the Privy Purse was a woman

Prince's TV firm to produce life of Queen Mother

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

PRINCE Edward's television production company, Ardent, is to make a £6 million dramatised biography of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, which will be shown on ITV next year.

The Prince has consulted his grandmother and received her permission for the eight-part series, which covers the period from her marriage to Prince Albert, Duke of York, in 1923 to the Coronation in 1953.

The actresses Jennifer Ehle, who starred in the BBC Television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, and Helena Bonham Carter are being considered for the central role of the Queen Mother, which has provisionally been entitled *Century*.

A spokeswoman for Ardent said that although the Prince would have no direct editorial involvement in the production, "it would be daft to say he has not had influence in the early stages."

"The Royal Family will not be shown scripts for the serial. It will be a very dramatic account of the Queen Mother's early life. We won't just trawl through the history. The Queen Mother is a well-loved figure and it will be a fascinating story," she said.

Vernon Lawrence, managing director of MAI Produc-

tions, which has commissioned the programme for ITV, said: "The series will cover one of the most fascinating periods in our recent history, seen through the life of the Queen Mother."

"Her place and influence on the great events of this century have never been fully appreciated."

The series will be scripted by Julian Bond, 65, whose work includes the screenplays for the films *The Whistle Blower* and *The Shooting Party*.

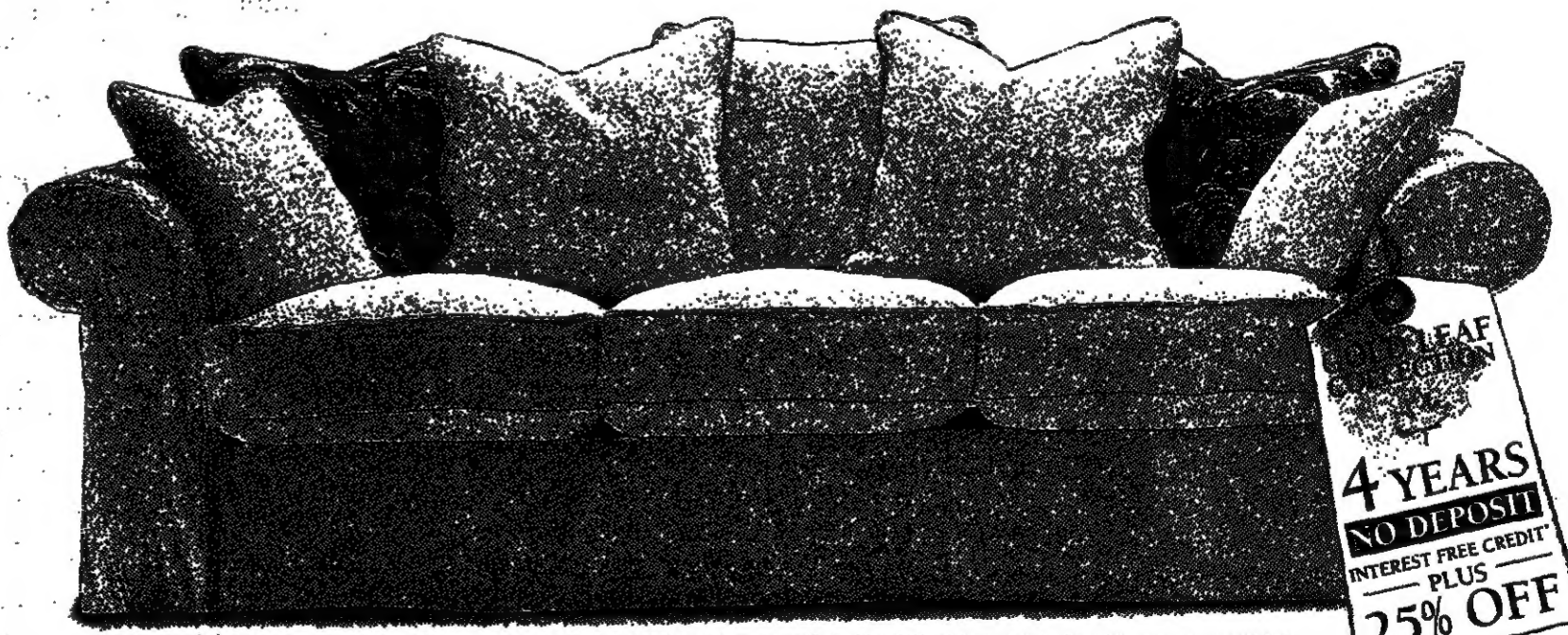
A Buckingham Palace spokesman said: "The Queen Mother and the Queen have been informed and have agreed to the project."

The programme will be the Prince's second important project about his own family. Ardent Productions has already made a two-part documentary about Edward VIII, called *Edward on Edward*. The programme will be shown later this spring to coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of his abdication.

Ardent's first drama production, *Annie's Bar*, a political soap set in the tearoom in the House of Commons that deals with politicians' passions and peccadilloes, had its first showing on Channel 4 last night.

Matthew Bond, page 39

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Devalued investments provoke funding crisis

Worshippers to be asked for 5 per cent of earnings

By Russell Jenkins

THE Anglican Church's 1.5 million regular attenders will be expected to dig deeper in their pockets to fund the clergy's pensions under proposals to go before the General Synod next week.

Senior churchmen spoke yesterday of encouraging congregations to give 5 per cent of their earnings when the collection plate is passed around in Sunday services. On average parishioners will be asked to pay an extra £1.50 a week to fund the £30 million a year needed to meet pension costs from 1998.

Each diocese will be expected to raise its share from parishioners. They promise that the impact will be cushioned as the new pension arrangements will be phased in for up to six years.

The problem of clergy pensions has been looming since the 95 Church Commissioners, who manage assets of £2.4

billion, lost £800 million in investments devalued after the 1980s property boom.

When the commissioners assumed responsibility for funding pensions in 1954, they absorbed 7 per cent of income. That figure had risen to half the income by last year and is likely to swallow the entire income by 2010.

The synod will be asked to set up a pension fund, financed by contributions from dioceses and parishes and administered by a board of trustees. The Church Commissioners, who contributed £73.9 million towards pensions in 1994, will continue to guarantee payments to existing pensioners and commitments to clergy until a cut-off point — probably April 1998.

Vicars now face the task of selling the new policy to dwindling congregations who are already concerned at the way a significant part of the

Parishioners have been told that £20,000 they donated to repair their church tower is missing. The discrepancy came to light when the parish church council accounts for St. Leonards, the village in Hereford and Worcester, were examined after Ben Durham, the treasurer, died suddenly in December. Police are investigating whether a crime has been committed.

Church's fortune was squandered in the late 1980s. Philip Mawer, the synod's general secretary, said: "They [parishioners] will be asked to pay more but it is not absolutely clear how much more. The debate is between the aspirations of the clergy and affordability." There are 11,000 clergy pensioners and

their widows, outnumbering the 10,500 working clergy. The standard pension, of two thirds of the previous year's national minimum stipend, stands at £8,400.

When a clergyman retires, he can expect to receive the standard pension plus a lump sum of £25,200. Archbishops can expect twice the basic rate, diocesan bishops 1½ times the basic rate and suffragan bishops, deans, provosts and archdeacons 1¼ times the basic rate.

The pensions are linked to stipends, which have been rising faster than average earnings during the past decade. The Pensions Board, under pressure to make cuts, is scheduled to present its proposals next summer. One option is to link pensions to inflation.

The synod will also discuss the implications of the Turnbull Report, which sets out the biggest organisational upheaval in the Church of England for centuries. The recommendations, which effectively put the Archbishop of Canterbury at the head of a business-style management structure, have been widely criticised for concentrating power within the Church at the top.

A White Paper drawn up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in consultation with the synod's standing committee has made modifications to appease the hard-line critics.

It recommends that the proposed engine house of the Church, should be called the Archbishop's Council. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York would become joint Presidents of the Council and fewer bishops would act as "executive chairmen" on the council.

The paper also emphasises the continuing importance of the General Synod.

Churches set up inquiry into immigration Bill

By Arthur Leathley

MICHAEL HOWARD faces a fresh confrontation with the judiciary as a high-level inquiry is opened to examine his asylum and immigration proposals.

Senior religious leaders have worked with lawyers, charities and immigration welfare groups to set up wide-ranging investigation of government plans to curb the rights of asylum seekers.

The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland is the main mover behind the independent public inquiry. It is likely to bring the Home Secretary into direct conflict

with one of the country's most senior former judges, who is chairing the inquiry. Sir Iain Glidewell, who retired last year as a lord justice of appeal, is to chair a panel taking evidence from a wide range of organisations on the principles and practical implications of the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Mr Howard and senior Home Office officials will have the opportunity to give evidence to the panel during the coming month. The move to expose the Bill to detailed examination will re-ignite the controversy surrounding the Government's refusal to set up a special standing committee

to analyse the legislation. Ministers have said the Bill is aimed at reducing the number of people making bogus applications for asylum in Britain.

The inquiry is expected to report before Easter, in advance of the Bill completing its passage through the Lords. New rules limiting the rights of asylum seekers to claim state benefits will be introduced next week.

Among other panel members are Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Dr David Say, assistant bishop of Canterbury, and Ranjit Sondhi, former deputy chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Clergy seek showdown with dean

By Russell Jenkins



The Dean of Lincoln: asked by bishop to go

CLERGY in the diocese have called a meeting with Lincoln Cathedral cleric next week to try to resolve the long-running public dispute between senior staff.

About 50 canons in the diocese intend to confront the dean, the Very Rev Brandon Jackson, about his future in the cathedral.

Canon Raymond Rodger, personal assistant to the bishop, the Right Rev Robert Hardy, said: "There is a groundswell of feeling in the diocese about what is happening. This meeting was called by the

canons because they want to express their feelings about matters at the cathedral and they want an opportunity to speak their minds to the dean and chapter."

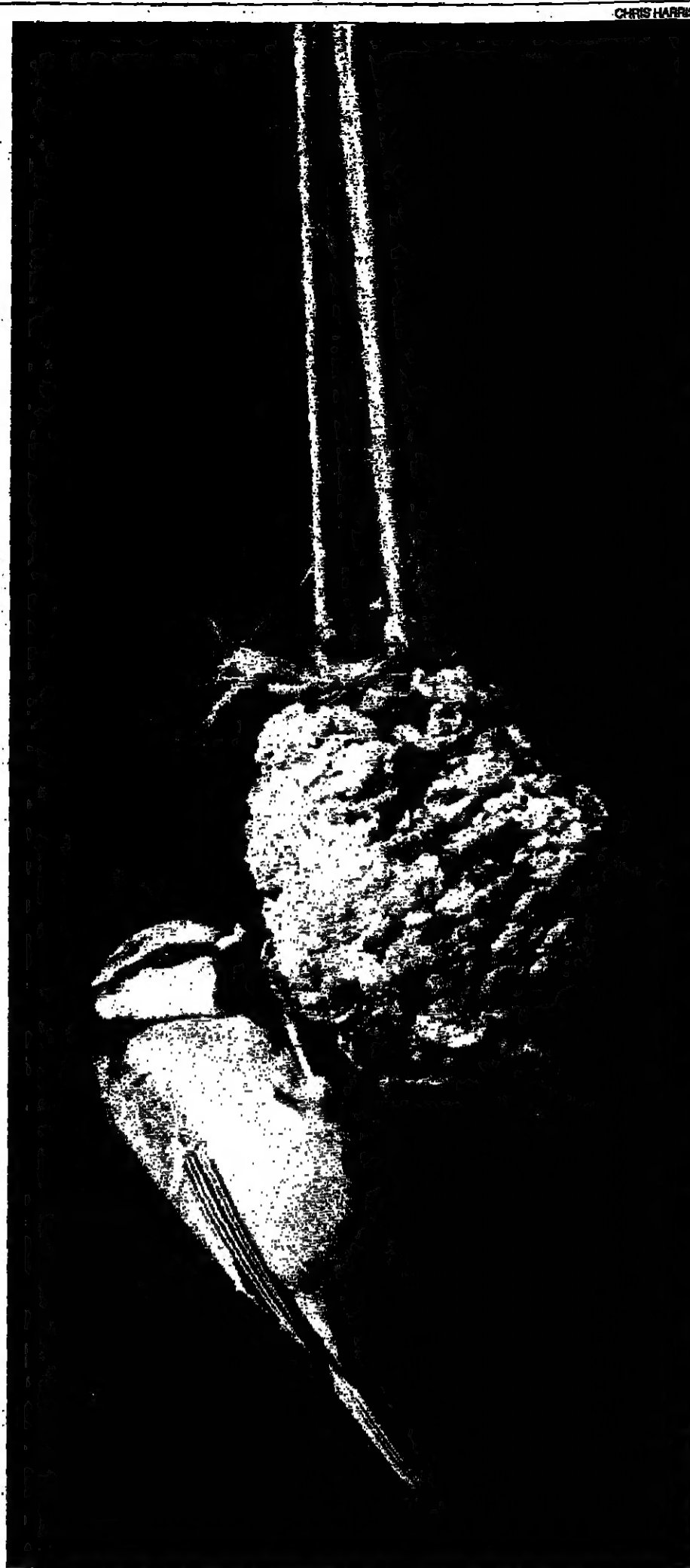
The row goes back to a loss-making exhibition of the cathedral's Magna Carta in Australia in the late 1980s. It was exacerbated last summer when Dr Jackson, 60, was acquitted in a church consistory court of sexual misconduct with a former cathedral verger, Verity Freestone, 31.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, became so alarmed at the dispute late last year that he sent two representatives to

hear the views of the factions. Cathedral staff made clear then that they no longer had confidence in the dean's leadership. Afterwards the bishop called for his resignation, saying relationships with staff were "past reconciliation".

There is likely to be further damage done to the Church's reputation when Mr Freestone takes his claim against the dean and chapter for unfair dismissal and sexual harassment to an industrial tribunal.

One canon said: "The (canons) are sick and tired of what is going on and they feel something needs to be done. I also sense there is very little support for the dean."



A bluetit tucks into fat-coated scraps at the Islington Ecology Centre in London

Bird lovers learn the fats of life

GARDEN birds struggling to survive the freezing weather could be thrown a lifeline by householders who pour their cooking fat down the sink. Water bosses are

appealing to cooks to mix the melted fat from the Sunday roast with seeds, dried fruit and scraps and put it out for the birds. When cooled, it can be hung in the garden,

providing vital nourishment in the cold spell. Every year 100 tons of fat are poured into the drainage system in the Thames area, blocking the pipes in 6,500 homes.

'Rioters' called for chicken curries

Prisoners involved in one of Scotland's worst jail riots stopped petrol bombing prison officers and smashing up furniture to ask negotiators for 22 chicken curries. A court was told yesterday.

The High Court in Stirling heard that rioters held a prison officer hostage and had threatened to stab him during a violent siege at Glenochil prison near Alloa.

Paul McGuigan, 31, a prison officer, said one of the two demands was for chicken curries for the 22 men in the wing. The trial of eight men, who deny rioting, continues.

Murder charge

Mark Weston, 21, of Ascot-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire, will appear before magistrates at Witney today charged with the murder of Vikki Thompson, 30, who lived in the same village. The mother of two died in August, six days after she was found badly beaten in woodland where she had been walking her dog.

Shutting up shop

Jim Heritage, 37, of Coventry, who has been prosecuted 40 times and jailed on ten occasions for shoplifting, was banned from all Tesco supermarkets in England and Wales. He consented to the injunction, which Tesco had sought at the High Court. "Where can I go now?" asked the divorced father of two, who is banned from his local shops.

Taxing task

A committee of senior judges, MPs and other public figures are to investigate ways of curbing tax avoidance, under the auspices of the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Lord Justice Millett and Mr Justice Carnwath, both experts in the field, have been asked to join the committee, which already includes Lords Nolan and Templeman, law lords.

Bomb made safe

A Second World War German bomb found in a lake in South Norwood, Surrey, was made safe after a controlled explosion by army experts yesterday. Railtrack stopped trains in the area between Sam and 9am. Residents spent the night in a nearby sports centre after the 100lb bomb was found by a park keeper.

Case collapses

The case against three Manchester men accused of killing a football fan in a brawl outside a pub in Walsall, West Midlands, collapsed. Ian Gillespie, the Walsall stipendiary magistrate, decided that Neil and Ian Spence and Steven Rimmer had no case to answer. They had been accused of manslaughter and violent disorder.

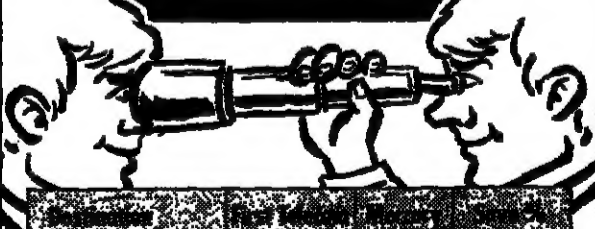
Phone alert

Islington council is proposing to issue roadworkers in the King's Cross area with mobile telephones so they can make emergency calls if they are attacked. But some suggested the phones would attract muggers. One worker said: "If I was getting mugged, a mobile phone would be the first thing I would hand over." The council would not comment.

Red-handed

Surgeries and hospitals in the Thames Valley area were warned to be on the alert yesterday for a burglar who left a finger during a break-in when he was attacked by a greyhound. Police were unable to take prints after the incident in Cornhillbury, Milton Keynes, because the dog ate the finger while his owner was dialling 999.

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NHS 'ignoring the plight of osteoporosis victims'

By Jeremy Laurance, Health Correspondent

MORE than half the health authorities in the United Kingdom are ignoring government advice on the crippling bone disease osteoporosis, specialists said yesterday.

Lives are being put at risk and thousands of people suffering unnecessarily because of the failure to implement guidelines on treatment and prevention issued a year ago by the Government's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, the National Osteoporosis Society said.

A national survey by the society showed that more than half of health authorities had made no plans to open specialist osteoporosis clinics for the one in three women and one in 12 men affected. More than

one in ten authorities admitted they were doing nothing.

The cost of a basic osteoporosis service is estimated at £50,000 in each health district, less than the cost of caring for two weeks' hip fractures.

Linda Edwards, the society's director, said: "Lack of action is condemning thousands of men and women to a life destroyed by fractures, pain and deformity because they are being denied the basic right to early diagnosis and effective treatment. Hundreds of thousands of people could avoid the disease if they received better advice on prevention and earlier treatment. It is grossly unfair that, because you live in one district and not another, your friends may be

getting help on the NHS while you receive no help or must travel hundreds of miles to obtain private treatment."

Osteoporosis is caused by loss of protein from bones, which become thin and brittle and fracture easily. Hormonal changes at the menopause make women especially vulnerable. The condition can be treated with drugs to slow or stop bone loss provided it is detected early enough. This can be done by a bone scan to measure the patient's bone density.

The health department guidelines recommended that health districts provide at least 600 bone scans a year. Only one health authority in eight is meeting this minimum.

Gentle wardens anger traders

By Michael Horsnell

TRAFFIC wardens in the old Devon port of Topsham have been accused of being too kind to motorists who ignore the parking restrictions. Shopkeepers claim the narrow streets are clogged because the two part-time wardens are not made of the right stuff when dealing with drivers they know in the closely knit town.

Instead of reaching po-faced for their ticket pads like the best of their breed, they have allegedly sought out offending motorists in nearby shops and given them a chance to move their cars rather than pay the £20 fine.

One shopkeeper said: "The trouble is that people in Topsham are just plain lazy and they hate walking any-

where. There are perfectly good car parks but people will not use them. They prefer to park illegally outside the shops. Our wardens could win a prize as the kindest in the world."

Mary Evans, a Tory councillor on Exeter City Council, who lives in Topsham, said: "It is very difficult as one of them lives in the town and knows everyone. They do hand out tickets but they always do it with a smile on their face."

Inspector John Fulman of Exeter police said: "It is difficult for wardens if they are working in a small town rather than a city. Often a word in an ear is better than handing out tickets."

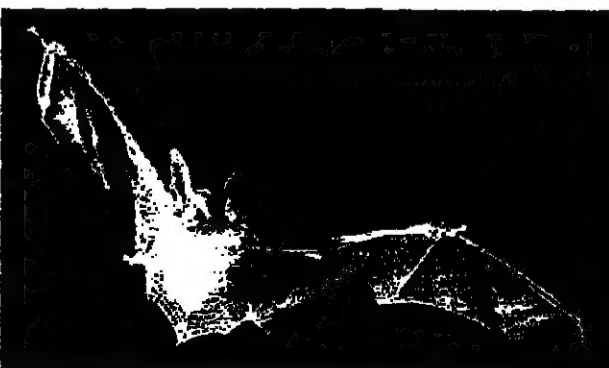
British bat follows wolf into dark night of extinction

By Michael Horsnell, Countryside Correspondent

BRITAIN'S mouse-eared bat, which has not been seen for five years, is believed by wildlife experts to be extinct — the first British mammal to have suffered that fate since the wolf in 1745.

Several others of the 15 native bat species are rare and may be endangered. Conservationists are to carry out the first census of the dwindling bat population with the aid of a £500,000 grant from the Environment Department.

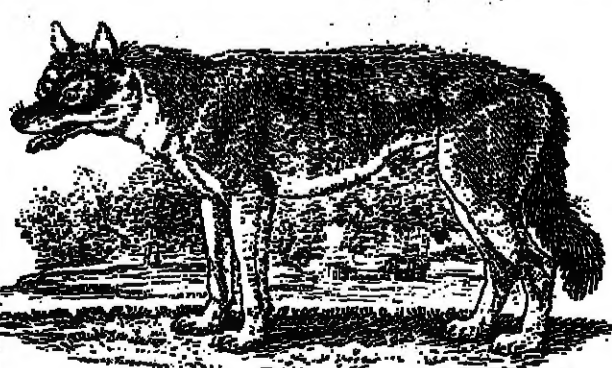
Colin Catto, scientific officer of the Bat Conservation Trust, said: "Bats are an integral part of Britain's ecology. They are not pests and



The mouse-eared bat has not been seen for five years. The wolf was the last British mammal to vanish, in 1745

they are not rodents. A lot of people form their impressions from horror movies and associate bats with dark imagery and evil. They need lots of positive PR. We think there

are no more than 4,000 greater horseshoe bats left and we also know that Bechstein's bat and the barbastelle bat, both woodland species, are extremely rare." The trust will



The mouse-eared bat has not been seen for five years. The wolf was the last British mammal to vanish, in 1745

conduct the survey over five years with the help of 93 volunteer bat groups. The operation will involve a painstaking count of hibernation sites and summer roosting

places, often in old buildings and hollow trees. "We will also be carrying out field surveys using detectors which can pick up the ultrasound signals emitted by bats," Mr

Catto said. "Bats are nocturnal creatures and use a sophisticated echo-location system, similar to radar, to navigate and to detect insect prey, though no bats are blind, contrary to popular belief."

One of the main problems for bats has been the decline in insects, their sole food source, because of increased use of pesticides by farmers and the loss of insect-rich habitats such as hay meadows and marshland over the past 50 years.

Tidying up woods, with the loss of hollow trees, converting old farm buildings into houses and blocking up caves and old mine shafts have also reduced the number of roosting and hibernation sites.

DNA testing could at last identify Sixties sex killer who quoted from the Scriptures

Police dig up body after 16 years in Bible John hunt

BY GILLIAN BOWDITCH

POLICE exhumed the body of the man they believe to be Scotland's most notorious serial killer at dawn yesterday in a snow-covered cemetery.

Inside a makeshift tent, six officers wearing boiler suits and surgical masks started digging up the body of John Irvine McInnes, said to be Bible John, a murderer who lured young women from a Glasgow dance hall to their deaths almost 30 years ago.

Two leading pathologists, Professor Anthony Basu of Edinburgh University and Dr Marie Cassidy, a consultant attached to Glasgow University, were present as the body was brought to the surface at Stonehouse cemetery, Strathclyde. They later began the task of extracting DNA samples in an effort to establish a match with semen found on the tights of Bible John's last victim, Helen Puttock. They may also take casts of McInnes's teeth. Teeth marks on the woman's body showed the killer had deformed front teeth.

The results of the tests may not be known for some weeks but police are almost certain



Bible John's photo and Pat Docker, a victim

they have traced the killer. DNA found on the victim has already been matched with DNA from one of McInnes's relatives.

McInnes, known to friends and family as Irvine, committed suicide in 1980 aged 41 and is buried with his mother and father, Robert and Elizabeth, who are remembered by villagers as devout Christians who regularly attended the old gospel hall.

Police also had to exhumate Mrs McInnes's body as she was buried on top of her son. She died in 1987 aged 91.

The dig took place at first light in accordance with an old Scots law. It was so cold that the sweat started to freeze on

the backs of the policemen digging. Portable heaters were brought into the tent and pneumatic drills were used to break up the ground.

Mrs McInnes's body was removed to the local undertakers. She is to be reinterred with a funeral service. Her son's remains were taken to the police mortuary in Glasgow.

The murders took place between February 1968 and October 1969. The three victims, Patricia Docker, 25, Jennina McDonald, 32, and Helen Puttock, 29, were strangled after leaving the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow with a man quickly known as Bible John because Mrs Puttock's sister, Jeannie, who had been with her on the night she died and met her killer, heard him quote from the Bible.

McInnes, a former Scots Guardsman, who often went to the ballroom, was arrested by police but Jeannie Puttock failed to pick him out at an identity parade. She had told police that she was certain she would recognise the killer.

The inquiry reopened six months ago after traces of semen were found on Helen



Police officers confer at Stonehouse cemetery during the dig yesterday; drills were needed to penetrate the frozen soil

Puttock's tights. DNA technology, not available in the Sixties, gave a reliable genetic fingerprint of the man.

The forensic science laboratory of Strathclyde Police had put out a routine request that all samples from unsolved murder cases be resubmitted for examination with the latest technology. Two detectives

then spent months sifting through the evidence and questioning the original detectives in the case. The thousands of witness statements were computerised and searched for matches and a list of a dozen suspects was compiled before police homed in on McInnes. A DNA test on a relative convinced them to

apply for a warrant to exhume his body.

The inquiry has shocked McInnes's family. His former wife Ella, a nurse, has remarried and lives in Saudi Arabia. She and McInnes had two children who live in England. Villagers in Stonehouse said yesterday that they remembered McInnes as a smartly

dressed furniture salesman who drank in local pubs.

Police in Lothian plan to use the technique again on the victims of the World's End pub murders in Edinburgh 19 years ago. Two girls aged 17 were abducted and killed after drinking there. Police, though, say there is no prime suspect yet.

Villager jailed for campaign of arson

A MAN who brought terror to a village by setting fire to cottages and haystacks was jailed for 12 years yesterday.

Alan Price, 35, a farm labourer, caused £229,000 damage over four years in Pitt, Hampshire, where he lived. It was luck that no one died in the fires, police said. The arsonist would be on the scene when the emergency services arrived. He once told neighbours whose house he had set alight to call the fire brigade.

Passing sentence at Southampton Crown Court, Judge Chalkley said Price had committed "an act of prolonged wickedness".

At an earlier hearing, Keith Cutler, for the prosecution, had said: "Whoever was responsible was putting the lives of the occupants in extreme danger. The prosecution is not suggesting he was attempting to kill the occupants of the houses. But we are suggesting that he couldn't care less. For some reason, he wanted his fire — so he could watch it or help the fire service. Villagers were in terror of one night something happening."

Price denied 11 charges of arson and eight charges of arson "being reckless as to whether life would be endangered". He was convicted on seven counts in December.

Guy Boney, QC, for Price, said that there was a pattern between him drinking and starting the fires.

Distressing signs parents must face



MEDICAL BRIEFING

DOCTORS and nurses need to work for only a week or two in a maternity unit to realise the saloon bar opinion that all babies look alike is nonsense. There are huge variations, and, although all children appear equally beautiful, to their parents the medical staff know differently.

One of the stranger facial malformations that in a well-developed case could not be missed by the most confirmed male chauvinist is the Treacher Collins syndrome, which affects one in 50,000 babies born in Britain.

Without surgery the facial deformities, and the deafness that is associated with the syndrome, make it a most distressing condition. The malformation can affect the cheekbones, the chin and lower jaw, which is often so rudimentary that the child has a grossly receding chin.

The external ears may be entirely absent, squashed or very small and the middle ear also may be missing, leading to a conductive deafness.

The lack of cheekbones allows the eye to slope downwards and the eyelids to droop. The syndrome may be complicated by cleft palate. In half the cases of the Treacher Collins syndrome it is inherited

in an autosomal dominant fashion, which means that if one parent is affected the odds are that 50 per cent of their children will also have some, or all, of the features of it. In the other cases the parents appear absolutely normal.

The degree to which the child is malformed varies; in some cases the deformity is so trivial that it would be apparent only to a doctor, and would certainly be overlooked by friends and neighbours.

The frequent presence of deafness in the condition aroused the interest of the Hearing Research Trust. With the Wellcome Trust it has supported a team led by Professor Mike Dixon of Manchester University, which, working in collaboration with American scientists, has now isolated and cloned the gene responsible.

The research will enable doctors to offer more accurate prenatal and postnatal diagnosis to most of the families afflicted with the disease. Babies born with the syndrome are already benefiting from advances in plastic surgery.

DR THOMAS STUTTFORD

Calmer seas yield cheaper catches

FISH landings have recovered after the storms and traditional white fish has dropped in price. Cod fillets are about £2.95 a lb and haddock £2.80. Among flat fish, lemon sole is an excellent buy, about £2.90 a lb for small to medium whole fish. Oil-rich fish are in fine condition, with large Scottish herrings about 95p a lb and mackerel £1.20.

Cauliflower and carrots are more expensive but parsnips for baking and broccoli for steaming have fallen in price. Most meat departments have discounts on beef: sales have fallen by 17 per cent since the revived BSE scare. It is high season for Cape plums, priced from 65p to £1.20 a lb.

Promotions include: Asda: fresh pork shoulder £2.39 a kg, coleslaw 62p for 333g, light cottage cheese with pineapple £1.29 for 400g. Budgens: Valentine's Day cake £2.99, white seedless grapes 99p a lb, six fresh red roses £3.99. Co-op: fresh minced lamb £1.69 for 400g, skinless boneless chicken thighs £2.99 for 550g, steak, kidney and onion pies 99p for four. Harrods: game torte £10.95 each, English roast beef £3.25

for 100g, red and black tilapia £7.25 a kg, rainbow trout £4 a kg. Iceland: grade A chicken 1.4 to 1.5kg £1.39, four chicken Kiev £2.75, boned kippers £1.49 for 680g, salmon campanelle 99p for 350g. Marks & Spencer: lightly or oak-smoked salmon £2.49 for 400g, family Cumberland pie £2.75 for 908g, fruit salad £1.99 for 600g. Sainsbury's: breaded skinned cod fillet £1.99 for 320g, creamy pepper chicken Kiev £1.69 for 567g, honey-roast ham 69p a 4 lb, crumpets 39p for 12. Sainsbury's: boneless chicken breasts £3.99 for 567g, fresh boneless shoulder lamb £4.28 a kg, parsnips 59p a lb. Somerfield: fresh British rump or Scottish popesye steak £6.56 a kg, cantaloupe melons £1.39 each, white seedless grapes 79p a lb. Tesco: large or extra large whole chicken £1.89 a kg, half shoulder of lamb £2.69 a kg, small cod fillets £1.65 a lb, broccoli 69p a lb. Waitrose: fresh chicken goujons £2.49 for 340g, large fresh dressed Cromer crab £2.49, 450g mushrooms 99p.

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Review of MPs' salaries answers only part of the problem

The debate about MPs' pay is much broader than review bodies, or even salary levels. It is about what sort of MPs we want. The Government's intention to refer the issue to an independent organisation with very tight terms of reference like the Senior Salaries Review Body can therefore only answer part of the problem. At most, it will create a new, and probably cumbersome, mechanism for fixing MPs' pay and pensions. But it cannot address the real reason why Parliament is held in such low esteem and why there has been such a public outcry this

week about even calls for a big pay rise.

There is no agreement about the role of MPs. At one extreme is the High Tory view that being an MP is a public service, on top of people's existing business and other interests. Therefore, MPs should either receive nothing or merely an allowance in no way related to salary levels elsewhere. This only worked in a world, which disappeared half a century ago, when being an MP was only demanding for part of the year and most MPs either had a substantial income from investments or were

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

paid union officials. But this is now hopelessly out of date and would limit membership of the Commons to millionaires and monks. It also ignores MPs' growing burden of work, both in the Commons itself and, particularly, from constituents. But most MPs who have outside interests also spend a full week on their parliamentary activities.

At the other extreme is the Labour Left view that MPs should

be full-time members of the Commons with outside interests forbidden. But this risks a further expansion of the caste of full-time professional politicians with little outside experience, thus narrowing the political class even more. What is needed is a better balance of full-time politicians and those who switch in mid-career and become MPs, spending two or three terms in the Commons. MPs should be allowed outside interests, provided these are separate from membership of the Commons. Salaries should be set at a level sufficient to attract people of

talent and established careers in their late 30s and 40s who often have heavy family responsibilities. Almost no one becomes an MP to make money but their pay should be well above the current £34,000 a year, which is below the earnings of many officials of the Commons, let alone most political journalists. It is mischievous to add the allowance for office and secretarial expenses to suggest that MPs can earn up to £100,000 a year. Some MPs probably do abuse the system, though more have to meet some of their office costs from their basic salary. It would be better to

separate the two items entirely. There is an even more urgent case for higher salaries for ministers.

But at some stage the Commons is going to have to go beyond merely financial calculations to examine whether we need as many MPs as we now have. Over the past few months, there have been a number of calls, in newspapers and from retiring MPs, notably Douglas Hurd, for a reduction in the size of the Commons. David Butler, the dean of British political scientists, argues in his foreword to the 1996 edition of the Hansard Society's *Parliament and Govern-*

ment Pocket Book that the number of MPs (currently 651 and due to rise to 699 after the election) should be reduced to, say, 500. Many would argue that the size of the executive should also be cut. This could be part of a package, including also the Nolan proposals and higher pay. There is scant chance of this happening unless there are much more radical constitutional reforms. But this is the only way that sizeable pay increases are likely to be politically acceptable and salable.

PETER RIDDELL

Harman is facing revolt by local party activists

BY ANDREW PIERCE

THE row over Harriet Harman's decision to send her son to a selective grammar school provoked calls for her resignation from members of her constituency party last night.

Emergency motions calling on her to "step down from her national leadership roles" were tabled in three out of the nine branches of Camberwell and Peckham Labour Party. The motions were not included on the agenda of last night's branch annual meetings because they were not tabled within the designated nine day period. The MPs' local party critics denounced this as an attempt to silence criticism and debate.

Despite the procedural out-maneuvring of the Shadow Health Secretary's small but vocal band of critics, the party leadership was struggling to contain a growing constituency revolt.

Ms Harman, who was not present at any of last night's meetings, will have to face the fury of the 760-strong local party at its annual meeting at Southwark town hall in two weeks. Yesterday feelings were running high in the south London constituency, which is one of the poorest boroughs in Britain. In some wards unemployment is as high as 35 per cent.

The row over the school has

brought to the surface long-standing resentment towards the MP from the left wing of the local party. But her position as MP, having been re-elected unopposed by more than two thirds of the association last summer, is not in jeopardy.

Some of her critics have dubbed her "two-minute Harman" in a barbed reference to the amount of time she spends at some constituency functions. Vincent Feiner, a Peckham Labour councillor and school governor, said: "We cannot be dismissed as a minority of malcontents. There is a huge furor within the local party. She should stand down from the front bench. As a governor of a local school I have to decide within two weeks whether to support grant-maintained status. I have written to Harriet Harman to seek her advice. I have had no reply. She has broken party policy and given a gift to the Tories."

Ian Driver, a councillor, said: "There is a wave of anger in the constituency. She should resign as a member of the Shadow Cabinet."

Miss Harman has made enemies in her own backyard for moving out of the constituency and into the neighbouring and far more fashionable Dulwich. Her enemies say that Simon Hughes, the

Liberal Democrat MP for neighbouring Bermondsey, has a higher profile in the area. Mr Hughes, for example, is a frequent attendee of the local police liaison committee. Miss Harman is not.

Tom Rowing, an officer of the Brunswick branch of the party, said: "Party members are angry with her. I do not want to do the Tories' dirty work for her so I would support her in any vote. I am in a minority. Most people I have spoken to are furious with her. I only hope that time will heal."

John Friary, a Labour councillor who is secretary of the Brunswick branch, said: "Harriet Harman has underestimated her local party. She has breached party policy and exposed us to a Tory attack. She should have resigned from the Labour front bench."

Clare Cozens, chairman of the local Labour party, accused a minority of malcontents of causing trouble for the Ms Harman. "They are not happy with Harriet Harman as MP but their views are not representative of the broad thrust of the local party."

Ms Cozens denied that criticism was being stifled. "The emergency motions arrived too late to be included on any agenda. I am not against debate. But I cannot tolerate breaches of the rules."



Theatre's best perform tragedy for sceptical Commons audience

BY DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE heavyweights of British theatre appeared at the House of Commons yesterday to plead with MPs for better arts funding.

An all-star cast gave evidence to the Heritage Select Committee, whose latest study covers the funding of the performing arts. They included the director Sir

Peter Hall, Adrian Noble, artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Richard Eyre, director of the Royal National Theatre, and the impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh.

Sir Peter attacked the Government, saying that its dwindling subsidy of the performing arts was allowing serious theatre to die. West End theatre would follow the example of Broadway in offering only "plastic musicals" for tourists. He said that there were almost no plays on Broadway, and theatres that once staged them were now dark.

In Britain, he said, every subsidised arts organisation had been "reduced to the bone". Ticket prices were dangerously high and there was no investment in the talent of the future. Cuts over the past

decade had increasingly hit the regional theatres where young actors learnt their trade. High prices were deterring young theatre-goers.

"At 14, I was able to practically live in the theatre on no money at all," he said. He lamented the demise of theatre-in-education schemes, saying "I worry over the schoolchildren who can no longer afford to go to the theatre because there is no money in local authorities."

Sir Cameron said: "Where are the new people going to be to replace us when we come to the end of our self-by-date?"

Mr Eyre sounded a note of despair after listening to Joe Ashton (Lab, Bassetlaw), who castigated the RNT and the RSC for not trying harder to secure business sponsorship.

The MP wanted to know why theatres did not follow the sports example of displaying sponsors' names on stadiums and clothing. Mr Eyre retorted: "Of course it doesn't happen. Football gets shown on TV. Theatre is seen by a small audience and is undervalued."

Mr Eyre expressed concern that 99 per cent of the country, including politicians, assumed that the lottery had endowed the arts with an "extraordinary fountain of riches" and that any funding problem must have been cured. In fact, the lottery had made it more difficult to argue their case. "We appear to be whingeing."

He called for the Government to change the rules that restrict lottery money to capital projects.

Major is expected to call pay inquiry

By Philip Webster
POLITICAL EDITOR

THE Government sought to defuse the row over MPs' salaries yesterday by taking the first steps towards an independent inquiry.

If the Opposition parties agree in talks over the next few days, the Senior Salaries Review Body, which decides the pay rates for judges, army officers and senior civil servants, will be asked to investigate MPs' pay.

Senior government sources predicted a "substantial" inquiry. But leading figures in both the main parties agreed that if the review results in big increases in the salaries of ministers and MPs it should ideally be dealt with before the general election.

The Cabinet decided yesterday that the increasingly embarrassing clamour over pay should be handled speedily. Demands from more than 360 MPs for an inquiry that some hope will lead to a doubling of their £34,000 salary have been denounced as insensitive by low pay and poverty pressure groups.

In the Commons John Major said that a "new mechanism" for determining the pay of MPs was required. The present link with the Civil Service has been made redundant because of a restructuring of salaries.

Labour had backed the call of the Commons motion for the issue to be handled by the Nolan committee. But members of the committee appear reluctant to take on the task and the Cabinet is thought to prefer the Senior Salaries Review Body because it already has within its terms of reference power to consider MPs' pay.

The decision to move speedily came as it was revealed that more than a million public sector workers would have to settle for rises of about 4 per cent. A formal announcement on the inquiry is expected next week.

Tory MP's widow is favourite to fight his seat

By James Landale, Political Reporter

THE battle for South East Staffordshire begins tonight when local Tories select their candidate for the forthcoming by-election.

The party faithful in this Middle England heartland will gather at the Masonic Hall in Tamworth to choose a replacement for Sir David Lightbown, the sitting MP who died last December.

Sir David's widow, Anne, has reached the final shortlist of three and is favourite to win. Lady Lightbown, a 57-year-old former teacher, is popular and many Tories hope she will carry on where her larger-than-life husband left off. Although no date has been fixed, the poll is expected to take place next month.

With a Tory majority of just 7,192, Labour is clear favourite to win the seat. The party already controls both councils in the constituency.

But local Tories hope the new-found confidence of their MPs at Westminster will encourage traditional but wavering supporters in Tamworth. Many Tories know they have a slim chance of achieving what would be the first by-election victory for the government since William Hague, the Welsh Secretary, won Richmond in 1989. Although the Tory majority in Staffordshire South East dropped by 3,000 at the last election, the

party's actual share of the vote went up. Tamworth Tories are also well aware of their market town's place in history as the birthplace of modern Conservatism. Sir Robert Peel's Tamworth address in December 1834 united a divided Tory party and set the stage for a revival of party fortunes.

Ron Cook, the Tory party chairman, is convinced history will repeat itself and Tamworth will become a benchmark for a new era of Tory popularity. "The feel-good factor has returned to the party in Staffordshire South East," he said. "We will use this by-election as a springboard to win the next election."

However, the Labour candidate, Brian Jenkins, 53, leader of Tamworth Borough Council, says he is convinced that dissatisfaction over Tory tax rises and job insecurity will swing voters towards Labour. Six of the 25 or so Tory MPs who are seeking safer seats to fight at the general election have been shortlisted for Bury St Edmunds and will be interviewed this weekend. They are Robert Banks, Harrogate; Nicholas Hawkins, Blackpool South; Michael Stephen, Shoreham; Dame Janet Fookes, Plymouth Drake; John Watts, Slough; and Richard Spring, who was MP for the old constituency.

IN PARLIAMENT

YESTERDAY in the Commons: questions to agriculture ministers and the Prime Minister followed by debates on the Royal Navy and Chilterns line station. In the Lords: Criminal Procedure and Investigation Bill, report; Number 6 Bridge (Devon)

Bill, second reading; GAA (Northern Ireland) Order; return of British Council. TODAY in the Commons: debate on the Sexual Offences (Conspiracy and Incitement) Bill; Voting Scheme Bill; the Midway Towers northern relief road.

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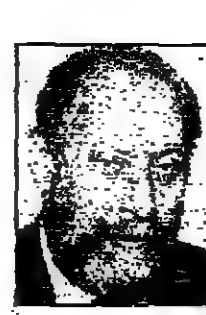
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Clement Freud on South Africa's grand finale

TELEVISION AND RADIO
Pages 38,39

THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook FRIDAY FEBRUARY 2 1996

Insurer aims to become £500m limited company

PPP to abandon provident status

BY PATRICIA TEGHAN AND ROBERT MILLER

PPP, the private healthcare insurance group, is poised to announce plans to shed its provident status and become a limited company valued at an estimated £500 million.

The move, which could be announced as early as next week, is understood to be part of an attempt to maintain market share in an increasingly competitive market. It will provide greater flexibility in capital raising and could pave the way for another firm to

take a significant share stake or for a stock market flotation. As a provident association, which traces its roots back to 1938, PPP is not technically owned by anybody. It is a company limited by guarantee. In its present structure it has a 13-strong board of directors who run the business and sit on a board of 26 appointed governing members. This board includes members of Royal Medical Colleges, the British Medical Association, and independent lawyers and accountants. The members' governing board provides a

guarantee, but their liability is limited to one guinea each. This structure makes it difficult for the firm to raise capital or consider joint ventures. PPP is thought to be about to create a trust vehicle that will own the company. This would enable it to meet corporate governance standards, to have greater flexibility for access to capital for acquisitions and to issue new shares that could be sold to a third party. Those thought likely to be interested include Abbey National, Legal & General and other insurers or building societies.

Last autumn PPP rebranded itself with a £30 million advertising campaign, a new corporate identity and a new range of products. It also changed its name from Private Patients Plan to PPP healthcare group, to reflect a mix of products. The decision to change its structure follows an 18-month review of its business and strategy. For the past year this has been led by Peter Owen, a former British Airways senior executive, who came in as chief executive with the brief of turning PPP into a market-

British Coal forced into retreat over pensions sale

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

BRITISH COAL has been forced to halt the sale of its company that manages pension funds worth £17 billion for rainers and staff after trustees derided plans for Friends Provident to buy the business.

British Coal said it was disappointed that the sale had been 'scuppered' after some trustees on the two pension funds — one for miners' and one for staff — objected because they feared job losses at CINMAN, the management company, and because they wanted the funds managed in a more hands-off manner.

In December, British Coal sparked anger among sections of the business when it singled out Friends Provident as the preferred bidder for CINMAN, after a lengthy search for a buyer. Many trustees preferred Sal Oppenheim, a German private bank.

Friends Provident is thought to have bid about £80 million to manage the funds, while Sal Oppenheim is understood to have offered about £18 million. The German bank



Riding high at half-time and ahead of expectations, Kevin Lomax at Misys

Shares jump as Misys springs profits surprise

BY MARTIN BARROW

SHARES in Misys rose almost 10 per cent yesterday after the software company reported an increase in half-year profits to £19.2 million before tax from £11.2 million. The shares ended 62p higher at 657p as analysts reassessed forecasts for the full year. The results, covering the six months to November 30, are the first to include a full contribution from ACT, a software company acquired by Misys last year for £193 million.

Kevin Lomax, chairman of Misys, said the results were ahead of the company's own expectations and reflected a particularly strong contribution from the enlarged banking division.

The pattern of trading is developing as expected and should result in a stronger bias towards the second half than normal," said Mr Lomax. Assimilation of the former ACT businesses was now substantially complete.

Group revenues increased to £129.5 million from £63.9 million. Most of the increase came from the addition of the ACT banking businesses to existing banking operations, where sales increased to £64.3 million from £15.7 million.

Mr Lomax said the worldwide consolidation now underway in the applications software products industry would provide further opportunities to expand internationally. The level of borrowings was reduced to £5.9 million from £12.4 million during the first half, leaving the company well-placed to consider bolt-on acquisitions. The banking division expects to benefit from growth in demand from emerging economies.

The interim dividend is increased to 3.97p a share from 3.45p, payable April 4. Earnings were 16.9p a share, rising from 16.2p.

Tempus, page 24

Facia and Sears find a fit

BY SARAH BAGNALL

STEPHEN Hinchliffe, the Sheffield businessman, is about to expand his retail empire early next week with the purchase of Saxeone and Currys, two high street shoe chains owned by Sears.

The deal will come less than a month after Sears publicly revealed the chains were up for sale. Liam Strong, Sears chief executive, said the company had decided to sell its 111 Saxeone and 124 Currys stores and that if no deal materialised relatively quickly, then the stores would be closed with the loss of 1,700 jobs.

In the space of two years Mr Hinchliffe — dubbed king of the high street in Sheffield — has built from scratch one of the biggest privately owned retail companies in the country. This deal will be the second between Facia, Mr Hinchliffe's company, and Sears.

Last August, Facia acquired 245 shoe shops in the Freeman Hardy Willis, Trueform and Manfield chains from Sears. These joined Mr Hinchliffe's string of existing businesses, including Sock Shop, Salisbury, the handbag business, Tora, the costume jewellery chain, and Red or Dead, the fashion and footwear company.

Production falls to three-year low

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

PRODUCTION from British manufacturers hit a three-year low in January, leading to the first decline in manufacturing employment for two years, according to the latest survey from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply.

However, there was a glimmer of better times ahead with news of a rise in orders and separate figures suggesting that British exporters are performing reasonably well in the face of the severe economic slowdown in continental Europe. Britain's trade deficit narrowed to its lowest level for eight months, in November, falling to £567 million from £1.63 billion in October, according to the Central Statistical Office.

One key to both sets of statistics is the continuing effect of last year's huge build-up of stocks as demand tailed off sharply. Yesterday's figures suggest that output is being kept down as companies try to reduce these stock levels and, for the same reason, imports have been subdued as companies meet their demand for foreign materials from stocks. At the same time, exports have continued to grow surprisingly healthily.

The Purchasing Managers' Index stood at 50.2 in January compared with 50.8 in December. Any reading below 50 indicates a contraction of manufacturing. The index has been hovering around 50 for five months, reflecting virtual stagnation in the sector.

But although employment fell for the first time in two years, orders, particularly for consumer goods, showed the strongest rise since August. This suggests that, once stocks are wound down, output should recover relatively quickly.

Seasonal surge in consumer credit

BY OUR ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

CREDIT card borrowing soared in December, backing up other evidence of a relatively buoyant Christmas in the high street, according to figures from the Bank of England.

There was an increase in net consumer credit of £797 million compared with a rise of £600 million recorded in November. The December figures topped off a year which saw a total increase in consumer credit of £7.51 billion, the biggest rise since this statistical series began in 1991.

Economists noted that these strong borrowing figures may not necessarily reflect higher spending. Gross lending fell slightly in December, suggesting that the surge in credit related partly to lower repayments rather than extra spending. In addition, a proliferation of zero interest rate schemes has encouraged people to use credit instead of cash.

Nevertheless, the figures overall suggest that consumers are beginning to gain in confidence. Separate figures from the British Bankers' Association confirmed that personal borrowing is quite buoyant. The association said that mortgage lending was up 9 per cent in the final three months of the year compared with the third quarter and consumer credit was up by almost a third.

Total lending was up by £6.36 billion in the final quarter and about 70 per cent of this was accounted for by lending to individuals.

Final figures for M4 money supply showed annual growth in the measure of 9.9 per cent. Broad money has now been growing faster than the upper limit of its 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range for three months.

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BY KAREN ZAGOR

Although the Britannia led the pack when it announced plans to offer members tangible rewards last July, it has lagged behind the Bradford & Bingley and the Yorkshire building societies in unveiling its membership loyalty scheme.



By GEORGE SIVELL

On Eurotunnel, he believes: "Beyond doubt, one should not structure another project like that. The governments,

the too-short financing structure staggered and then fell. We are now rebuilding the finances to last but, I say again, the Channel Tunnel is and will be open for business."

For the future, Sir Alastair believes: "Project financing must evolve because infrastructure and public service needs are mounting across the face of Europe, which faces the 21st Century with an invest-

He is convinced that both the specifying authority and the project operator "have to make promises and keep them — adjusting where necessary to ensure delivery of the real substance of what was promised". Sir Alastair is expected

□ The key channel of massive subsidy to the ferries, airports and airlines (intra Community duty free privileges) was improperly extended beyond 1 January 1, 1993, to the heavy disadvantage of the Tunnel.

By SON ABERNETHY

Firms have until March 1 to apply for authorisation. The SIB is prepared to seek High Court injunctions to restrain unauthorised trading.

THE management consulting arm of the former Touche Ross has joined up with its US company to form a new global management consultancy, Deloitte & Touche Consulting Group. The aim is to separate the new company from its accounting and tax parent, Deloitte, Touche, Tohmatsu International. The move is part of the current trend within accounting organisations to follow their clients in linking up and providing identical services across borders. The new company will owe its partner's incomes and its profits to a global rather than the UK company.

BALDWIN'S Industrial Services, the UK's third largest mobile crane hire and lifting service business, has shelved its proposed flotation, the group announced yesterday. It said that the terms available for the flotation were not acceptable to the family shareholders, who had decided not to proceed at this time. The company, based at Slough, Berkshire, said it and the shareholders were reviewing options with their professional advisers.

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

The prices paid by first-time buyers also rose by 0.1 per cent in January, but are down 0.1 per cent compared to the same time last year. The price of new houses rose by 2.4 per cent in January and are now 5.9 per cent above their level of a year ago.

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

The British economy is forecast to grow by around 2.6 per cent, lower than the Chancellor's forecast of 3 per cent but still the fastest growth of any European country. The school said that it expects growth to

It also notes that the strong mark, and those currencies that move most closely with it, is contributing to sluggish growth in Europe. At the same time, European countries with weaker currencies — such as Britain, Italy and Spain — have been most successful at maintaining growth.

By JON ASHWORTH

Royal Bank of Canada, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Bank of Nova Scotia, and National Bank of Canada, allege that Clifford Chance provided incorrect information in a legal

banks. They in turn sold out to a consortium including Paul Reichmann, the Canadian property developer, and Prince al-Waleed bin Talal, the billionaire Saudi investor. The \$800 million deal was clinched in December 1995.

has been produced to us that any loss was incurred by these banks in relation to these loans following the collapse of Olympia & York as a result of any alleged negligence on the part of Clifford Chance.

Sir Peter Levene, the former chairman of Canary Wharf, has criticised as "abominable" the role of North American banks in the run-up to the sale, singling out CIBC and Royal Bank of Canada for criticism.

	Bank Buy	Bank Sell
Australia \$	2.13	2.13
Austria Sch	16.57	16.57
Belgium Fr	46.37	46.37
Canada \$	2.159	2.02
Denmark Kr	0.065	0.70
Deutsche M	9.24	9.24
Finland Mk	7.46	7.46
France Fmk	6.15	7.75
Germany Dmk	2.41	2.41
Greece Dr	363.00	363.00
Hong Kong \$	12.26	11.31
India Rupee	1.02	0.9
Japan Yen	2595.00	2595.00
Italy Lira	2595.00	2595.00
Japan Yen	1773.20	161.90
Malaysia M	0.869	0.869
Netherlands Gld	2.29	2.29
New Zealand \$	2.40	2.40
Norway Kr	10.45	9.95
Portugal Esc	264.50	225.00
S Africa Rand	1.42	1.42
Spain Ptas	197.00	19.40
Sweden Kr	11.11	10.31
Switzerland Fr	1.57	1.57
Turkey Lira	1.812	0.095
USA \$	1.812	1.81

- Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates

THE TIMES

PRESENTS


Valentine's Day

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Once again, The Times offers the most romantic environment for your Valentine's Day messages. Through our exclusive arrangement with Aramis, we can send on your behalf a 30ml bottle of *Tuscanry Per Donna Eau de Parfum* for the ladies, or *Tuscanry Per Uomo Eau de Toilette* for the gentlemen, together with a card which reads: "Look for your message in The Times on Valentine's Day." Furthermore, the most original Valentine message published will win a weekend break at Riber Hall, Derbyshire (*above*), voted one of Britain's most romantic hotels. There may also be a runner-up prize of a case of champagne.*



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□ Hippocratic oath doesn't preclude making a profit □ Taking stock of the biotech boom □ EU offers a poor role model

Heading for a healthy future

GLAXO WELLCOME will make at least £3 billion of profit this year out of the sufferings of millions of people.

The company has aroused the occasional ire of Aids campaigners for charging for its AZT compound, but this is an isolated case. Pharmaceuticals companies may not be the most popular around, but there is no serious ideological opposition to their right to turn a profit.

Any local health trust, however, would blanch at the mere mention of the "p" word and must these days avoid all mention of its near neighbour in the dictionary, privatisation.

It is an odd dichotomy, but we have such utopian expectations of the caring professions. Drug companies may make money, but doctors must not.

Private medicine occupies an uncomfortable position somewhere in the middle, but the private medical insurers have always had the fig-leaf of being providers of mutual companies. They may charge for cover, but such charges balance costs and there are no profits.

Once PPP, one of the three big mutual companies providing private insurance cover, does demutualise, it will have to cope with both "p" words, and the resulting political stink.

If the insurer is quoted on the stock market, it will not be for

long, because there are any number of potential buyers. Demutualisation, however, is sold to members, looks like nothing less than a precursor to a sale. But a profit-making PPP, whether freestanding or part of a bigger group, would look uncomfortable like an American ambulance-chaser to some — and that is before executives start cashing in their share options.

Flotation is an option now because the private health insurance industry is in rather better shape than a few years ago, when several of the mutuals nearly went bust. The problem was the frequency of trivial claims, and the tendency of patients with pre-existing conditions to sign up shortly after these have been diagnosed.

The solution was a more rigorous weeding-out of the latter, and a more restrictive approach to problems treated.

There are currently approaching seven million people covered by private health insurance, and the majority did not sign up for it — the cover arrived as part of their terms of employment, under a company scheme. The

industry is concentrating on those outside such schemes, or those pushed outside by companies contracting out their staff.

Demutualisation will bring its benefits, in terms of capital-raising and the cutting of cumbersome historic ties with the medical profession. But imagine the scene a few years hence. The chief executive of PPP is grilled by City analysts at the annual results. How many medical staff have been laid off? Is there scope for further cuts in the services provided? How much have costs per patient fallen? It all seems a long way from the Hippocratic oath.

Up like a rocket, down like a stone

IF the rapid rise in biotechnology shares last year was baffling, yesterday's equally rapid collapse was entirely predictable. Celtech, its financial sponsor, had scrapped the development of a once-promising asthma drug, known only as CDP 840. Celtech investors fled in droves, and the



shares lost a quarter of their value within minutes.

The City's savviest dealers should have seen it coming. Celtech and its rivals climbed throughout 1995 and went into overdrive in December, when British Biotechnology, the best-known player in the sector, revealed positive results on the clinical trial of a cancer drug.

Celtech and the others did absolutely nothing to warrant their gains; they just had the good fortune of being part of the same industry and were swept along in the euphoria. Not long ago the phenomenally successful flotation of America's Netscape triggered the same hysterical buying of the fledgling Internet companies.

Investors routinely forget that it is one thing to discover a compound and prove it can help mankind, and another to develop and market it. The tiny biotech companies are fairly good at the former, but rarely have the financial means for the latter. It takes years of effort and hundreds of millions of pounds to bring a drug to market, and they cannot do it alone.

So Glaxo Wellcome, Zeneca and SmithKline Beecham could reveal at any time that their own rocket scientists have discovered dozens of rattle-dazzle compounds. They don't bother because a compound without a fully financed development plan is next to worthless.

The biotech sector will survive yesterday's sell-off. Good clinical trials from any of them will trigger a new wave of buying. So will the publication of encouraging circulars from brokers, who have their own reasons for starting the ball rolling again.

The industry, however, has a long way to go before it loses its casino image. The next rally, inevitably, will be followed by another dramatic sell-off. And so

it will go on. For private investors, careful timing is the only guarantee of success. That, and not being too greedy.

Go East, young free-trader

THE great case against the Maastricht treaty was that widening the union to include former Communist states was more urgent and important. Not so, the anti-Maastricht Adam Smith Institute claims in a new report, *The Eastern Market*.

According to the author, Michael Bell, a former Brussels groupie, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe would just prop up the EU's centralised, bureaucratic and protectionist tendencies. They would be better off aping Hong Kong's open-trade practices in their own outward-looking free-trade area. In any case, the EU will not easily or rapidly let them in.

All this is undoubtedly true, but another great lost opportunity of 1989, it would have been better if Austria, Sweden and Finland had stayed out of the

EU, instead expanding their rump free-trade area to the East. This could have encompassed Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and former Soviet states faster in a less demanding, more honest, half-way house.

Austria et al had other entrenched priorities, and the EU marketed itself skillfully. Poland, Hungary and Greece, Republic of Czechia, Spain and Portugal once did, that joining the EU was the best option to guarantee their new democracy.

In doing so, they opted, as so many do, for a chance at the lottery rather than the solid progress earned by virtue. Sadly, they have not won and the political lure conceals nasty economic surprises.

Confidence trick

FROM the Department of Co-incident Statistics comes the news that the housing market is, indeed, on the up again. This is the same housing market that was going to hell in a hand-basket before the last Budget and needed massive government assistance. Now, we hear from the Halifax of "a gradually rising trend for the past six months". It appears to the Government, you can always fall back on some recovery in confidence... a recovery that can always be socked by news of rising house prices.



Trading places: John Bishop, chief executive of Trade Indemnity, with Jean Lanier, director-general of Compagnie Financière, yesterday

Trade Indemnity succumbs to £177m takeover by French

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

TRADE INDEMNITY, the credit risk insurance company, yesterday agreed to accept a takeover bid worth £177.5 million from Compagnie Financière SFAC of France, the Commercial Union, the Guardian Royal Exchange, Munich Re and Swiss Re, which together own 53 per cent of Trade Indemnity, have accepted the 79p-a-share offer and can only change tack in the case of a higher offer, which analysts thought unlikely.

The terms represent a 33 per cent premium on the 73p closing share price on Wednesday. Trade Indemnity share-

holders will also get a second interim dividend of 1.4p a share. The company's shares rose 24p yesterday to close at 97p, matching the offer price. The takeover would mean no leading export credit companies remaining in British hands. The Government sold the short-term operations of the Export Credits Guarantee Department to NMC, a Dutch company, in 1991. John Bishop, Chief Executive of Trade Indemnity, said: "We are not becoming French. We are creating a major international group. What is important is the quality of the service."

The NMC operation now controls about 35 per cent of the UK credit insurance market, concentrating on the export side, while Trade Indemnity controls some 44 per cent, predominantly domestic but with a growing presence in the export market. Trade Indemnity issues its 1995 results on February 16 — they will reflect the 1992 underwriting year — and is confident of good figures. Pre-tax profits in 1994, for the difficult 1991 underwriting year, were £5 million. As the credit risk insurance business tends to follow the perfor-

mance of the economy as a whole, analysts expect Trade Indemnity's 1995 results to be more than £20 million.

Trade Indemnity would keep its own name, and Mr Bishop said he did not expect any job cuts. Compagnie Financière SFAC, the holding company, will have a new, "more international" name, he said. He will join the expanded group's executive committee, along with Paul-Henri Denieul, managing director of the French group, and Jean Lanier, its director-general.

Mr Bishop said he hoped the expanded group would be

able to improve its ability to provide services to multinational clients, helped by the sharing of commercial data and the joint development of information technology. The French group is the largest export credit insurer in France, with AGF, the French insurer, holding the biggest stake — 49.9 per cent. It owns a controlling share in COBAC, Belgium's leading credit insurer, and a 17 per cent interest in COFACE, the French state-controlled export credit insurer.

Tempus, page 24

Unilever in Irish tea deal

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

UNILEVER, the detergents and foods company, has confirmed its buying spree with the £78 million acquisition of the Irish arm of Lyons, the tea producer.

Unilever said that it was buying the 75 per cent stake in the company from Allied Domecq, the drinks company. A cash offer will be made for remaining shares at a similar price once the deal is complete.

The final price is dependent on a reduction for any dividend payments made by Lyons before the sale is finalised and a £38 million payment for Lyons Irish Enterprises, the holding company.

Lyons Irish Holdings is the

market leader in Ireland's £40 million a year tea market. Ireland has the highest per capita tea consumption in the world, at 3.2 kilograms a year.

Allied Domecq said that the sale formed part of its strategy to dispose of its food interests and brought disposals to £600 million in the past 18 months.

Unilever, whose chairman is Sir Michael Perry, also announced that it will buy AVO, a Dutch cleaning systems supplier, for an undisclosed sum. AVO has a turnover of £6 million.

Last month, Unilever spent £360 million on the acquisition of Diversey, a Canadian detergent producer.



Perry: Dutch acquisition

Biotech shares hit as Celltech scraps drug

By ERIC REGULY

BIOTECHNOLOGY shares slumped yesterday after Celltech reported that the company and Merck, its financial sponsor, had scrapped the development of a once-promising asthma drug (see Pennington, this page).

Celltech shares fell 24 per cent, from 68p to 51p, triggering a wave of selling in the sector. Chiroscience dropped 15p to 28p and Scotia Holdings 7p to 60p. Many biotech shares had been trading close to their 52-week highs before the announcement.

Celltech said the drug, known as CDP 840, "did not

reach the level which Merck and Celltech believed to be achievable and necessary in order to represent a significant therapeutic advance". Merck had given Celltech £7.5 million since 1994 to develop it.

British Biotech, the largest company in the biotech sector, was swept up in the selling but managed to raise £47.5 million yesterday from the subscription of shares under warrant. Holders of almost 9 million warrants subscribed to new shares at 52p a piece, representing 99 per cent of the warrants on issue. The shares closed at 213p, down 10p.

I therefore propose that the meeting be adjourned, sine die."

And that was it. Some shareholders did not understand that they no longer had any influence over the company's affairs and left looking confused. However, it was not a total loss for everyone. Some did what they always do at shareholders' meetings and made a beeline for the coffee and biscuits. One old gentleman said: "I don't like Granada and it took me a long time on the Tube to get here, but it beats sitting at home all day long."

Forte celebration ends up as a wake

By ERIC REGULY

IT WAS supposed to be Forte's finest moment. When, on January 16, the company called an extraordinary general meeting to approve the sale of its roadside eateries to Whitbread, it was still confident that it could repel Granada's £3.8 billion hostile takeover offer. Yesterday's meeting would, in effect, have been a victory celebration.

It was also supposed to be Sir Anthony Tennant's first appearance as chairman. Sir Rocco Forte ceded that

role, in the heat of battle last month, to try to win support from institutional shareholders.

Instead, the meeting was a melancholy affair — and extremely short. Forte had booked the Dauntin Dubarry room on the sixth floor of the Cafe Royal, in central London. It obviously expected a big crowd: the cavernous space has a capacity of 450 and goes for a minimum of £4,000. 30 or so shareholders who showed up, most of them elderly, looked lost among rows of empty seats. Sir Anthony, tall

and slightly stooped, shuffled up to the blue-felt podium and took his seat between David Stevens, legal director, and Alan Wheatley, a non-executive director. He seemed slightly embarrassed in the spotlights glare.

Sir Anthony's speech was brief. In his softspoken manner, he told shareholders that Granada, the victor, now controlled the majority of Forte's shares and could do what it wanted. "Granada has wished the meeting to be adjourned," he said. "A poll on the resolution would be a waste of time."

Welsh Water plans a name change

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

WELSH WATER proposes to change its name to Hyder — Welsh for confidence — after the takeover of South Wales Electricity to form Britain's second super utility (Pennington, this page).

While the water and electricity businesses will continue to trade under their old names to avoid customer confusion, the entity that controls both will be Hyder. The super utility formed from North West Water and Norweb electricity was named United Utilities.

Welsh Water, which must secure shareholder approval for the change of name, said: "Welsh Water's philosophy is to provide a quality of infrastructure and service which earns the confidence of its customers."

Welsh Water's offer for Swalec became unconditional on Wednesday.

Gas-link design is overhauled after protests

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

PLANS for a gas link between the UK and the Continent have been overhauled after a stream of protests in north Norfolk.

A planning application for the connection, which is being developed by a group of energy companies led by British Gas, provoked environmental anger with proposals to build surface works on farmland next to British Gas's plant at Bacton. The application was rejected by North Norfolk District Council.

The new scheme, which will go to the council today, involves building the terminal within British Gas's existing plant, so no extension of the gas complex will be necessary.

The Interconnector consortium had originally ruled out such an option because it felt that the development could disturb the present pipeline

network at Bacton, from which British Gas serves south-east England. The consortium says that engineering innovations have now overcome such risks.

Dr Philip Nolan, managing director of Interconnector, said that the new plans should appease the "understandable concerns" of local people about the environmental impact of a standalone site for the pipeline, which will run 150 miles to Zeebrugge, Belgium. He said: "We recognise that the new proposal is still subject to planning approval, but we believe that it addresses the wishes and concerns of local representatives and residents."

Dr Nolan said that the scheme would run on schedule, with the first gas due to flow by October 1998, if planning approval is granted.

The High Court of Ireland

1996 No 8 Cos Ct 5

IN THE MATTER OF
LIFETIME ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
AND IN THE MATTER OF
WINDSOR LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
AND IN THE MATTER OF
THE ASSURANCE COMPANIES ACT 1909,
THE INSURANCE ACT 1989 AND THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (LIFE ASSURANCE)
FRAMEWORK REGULATIONS, 1994.

TAKE NOTICE that a Petition has been presented to the High Court of Ireland seeking the sanction by the Court under section 13 of the Assurance Companies Act 1909 of a Scheme providing for the transfer to Windsor Life Assurance Company Limited of the rights, powers, obligations and liabilities of Lifetime Assurance Company Limited under the policies of life assurance written by it through its United Kingdom branch and for other ancillary relief. Copies of the Petition, the Scheme and the Scheme's reports thereon (including a report by an independent actuary) may be inspected at the offices of Lifetime, the Bank of Ireland and Windsor Life set out below during their usual business hours from 5 February 1996 until 23 February 1996.

The Petition is to be heard on 26 February 1996 at 11 o'clock in the forenoon at the Four Courts in the City of Dublin and any person who may be entitled to be heard may appear at the time of hearing in person or by counsel or solicitor. Any person who intends to so appear, and any policyholder who objects to the Scheme but does not intend to so appear, should give not less than two clear days prior notice in writing of such intention or dissent, and the reasons therefor, to either of the solicitors named below.

Copies of a circular containing a statement of the nature and an abstract of the terms of the Scheme and the full text of the actuary's reports referred to above will be furnished to any policyholder of either company requesting the same prior to the making of an order sanctioning the Scheme.

Dated the 2nd day of February 1996

McCann FitzGerald, 2 Harbourside Place, Custom House Dock, Dublin 1

Solicitors for the directors of Lifetime (Ref:PAC)

A&L Goodbody, 1 Earlsfort Centre, Hatch Street, Dublin 2

Solicitors for the directors of Windsor Life (Ref:CLP)

Offices at which documents may be inspected:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Lifetime: | Bank of Ireland: |
| - c/o Bank of Ireland, | - 20/22 Berkeley Square, London |
| 34 High Street, Slough | - 4 St Philip's Place, Birmingham |
| - Donegall House, | - 35/41 John Dalton Street, Manchester |
| 7 Donegall Square North, Belfast | - 41 Castle Street, Liverpool |
| - Lifetime House, Earlsfort Centre, | - 106 St Mary's Street, Cardiff |
| Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2 | - Atlas Chambers, King Street, Leeds |
| - 67/69, South Mall, Cork | - 65 St Vincent Street, Glasgow |
| - Eyre Square Centre, Eyre Square, Galway | - Registration Department, Callender Street, Belfast |
| Windsor Life: | - 11/15 Strand Road, Derry, Co Derry |
| - Windsor House, Telford Centre, Telford | - 31 Church Street, Athlone, Co Westmeath |
| - Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking, Surrey | - The Parade, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny |
| - Spencer House, St James' Place, London | - 60 The Quay, Waterford, Co Waterford |
| | - 125 O'Connell Street, Limerick |

Airtours finds a lift as Carnival comes to town

STOCK MARKET investors are hoping Airtours can bring a bit of sun into their lives soon by confirming that the US Carnival Corporation has taken a near 30 per cent stake.

The Airtours share price crept 6p higher to 436p on a turnover of 534,000 shares in a market where shares are normally quoted in parcels of 10,000. Whispers circulating in the Square Mile suggest an announcement is imminent.

Last month Airtours said it was in talks with Carnival about potential co-operation agreements. The speculation that Carnival was about to launch a full-scale bid for the fast-growing Airtours, which is Britain's second biggest package tour operator.

It now seems Carnival is prepared to take a 29.9 per cent stake in Airtours as well as agreeing co-operation agreements. The speculation that Carnival was about to launch a full-scale bid for the fast-growing Airtours, which is Britain's second biggest package tour operator.

There was a muted response to confirmation of the over-night cut in US interest rates. Brokers said much of it was already in the price. The reluctance of the Bundesbank to cut German interest rates also depressed sentiment.

In the event, an opening fall in the Dow Jones industrial average left the FT-SE 100 index nursing a fall of 6.5 points at 3,752.8 by the close. Total turnover reached 859 million, helped by further heavy dealing in Hanson, down 9p at 193p, where another 52 million shares changed hands.

Reed International dropped 24p to £10.12 despite a denial of a profits downgrade from the company's broker, ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

Persistent bid speculation lifted Yorkshire Electricity a further 17p to 736p, for a two-day gain of 52p. There is talk of a bid of 800p a share from West Coast, the US utility group, valuing Yorkshire at £1.2 billion.

The news that Celltech had abandoned further trials of CDP 840, its asthma treatment, after disappointing results from a series of Phase 2a studies sent the share price plunging 163p to 518p. The test had been carried out jointly with Merck, the US pharmaceutical group, its partner in the venture. The tests concluded



ERF tumbled after giving warning on full-year profits

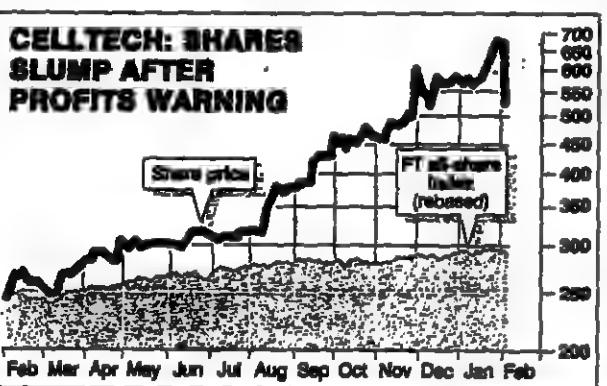
ed the treatment did not reach the level of effectiveness required and has saddled Celltech with milestone payments and royalties of £31.5 million.

The fall-out from Celltech hurt the other biotechnology shares with Canab Pharmaceuticals down 35p at 470p, Chiroscience 15p at 284p, and Cortice International 22p at

WPP Group, the advertising agency headed by Martin Sorrell, put on another 4p to a high of 176p. Pay day for Mr Sorrell looks as if it could come a lot sooner than expected. Under the terms of the deal struck, he has three years to get the share price up to 300p before triggering an estimated £25 million bonus.

ZZp. Grampian Holdings was steady at 122p. Bell Lawrie White, the broker, says that with the help of restructuring the shares could reach 200p within the next 18 months.

Tesco fell 6p to 292p as NatWest Securities joined the growing band of brokers who are estimating a downgrade in their profit estimates. It has cut its forecast for the year to February 1996 by £9 million to



its would leave the full year significantly short of market expectations. The market had been looking for a final of about £3.5 million. The group blamed a drop in new orders during December and early January. An effort was now being made to reduce debt and to find an alternative source of long-term funding.

Another profits warning left Vibroplant, the specialist

plant hire group, nursing a fall of 11p to 86p. The group said conditions had worsened since first-half figures were announced in November, and this will be reflected in second-half figures.

Outbacks in Government spending on the infrastructure and road building had hit the group's civil engineering activities.

Unitex was static at 480p with Electrowatt, its biggest shareholder, continuing to look for a buyer for its near 30 per cent stake.

Better than expected interim figures from Mips, the computer software group, sent its share price soaring 62p to 637p with pre-tax profits 71 per cent higher at £9.2 million.

The gold price staged a chart break-out as it climbed above \$410 an ounce, with traders forecasting that the next step for the precious metal could be \$440. This also provided gold shares with renewed impetus.

Gains were seen in American Gold, 134p to 569.84p, Randfontein 19p to 239p, Silifontaine 9p to 90p, and Vaul Reef 169p to 568.19p.

The building sector attracted institutional support in the belief that interest rates are set to fall and house prices rise during the next six months. Blue Circle rose 11p to 355p, Redland 4p to 403p, and Rugby 3p to 115p.

GLT-EDGED: Prices opened a touch easier with the overnight cut in US interest rates apparently already taken into account by institutional investors. But early losses were quickly wiped out partly helped by a weaker than expected US purchasing managers index and the latest jobless figures.

The failure of the Germans to cut rates also dampened sentiment. In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt finished five ticks better at £107.25 as a total of 67,000 contracts were completed.

At the longer end of the cash market, Treasury 8 per cent 2013 rose £1 to £102.16, while in shorts Treasury 8 per cent 2000 finished a tick down at £104.16.

NEW YORK: Shares traded lower at midday but the overall market was showing resilience after five consecutive record closes. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 18.06 at 5,377.24.

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 5377.24 (-18.06)
S&P Composite 636.48 (-0.63)

Tokyo:
Nikkei average 20956.32 (+122.56)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 11382.80 (+3.10)

Amsterdam:
ACE Index 363.74 (+0.39)

Sydney:
All Ordinaries 2281.1 (-1.4)

Frankfurt:
DAX 2499.26 (+0.88)

Singapore:
Straits Times 2652.25 (+0.10)

Brussels:
General 3600.91 (+31.68)

Paris:
CAC-40 2040.08 (+0.61)

Zurich:
SIX 341.70 (+0.30)

London:
FT 30 2384.6 (+5.0)
FT 100 3752.8 (-6.5)
FT-SE 100 3752.8 (-6.5)
FT-SE 250 1685.2 (-1.2)
FT-SE 100 1570.74 (+11.20)
FT-SE 250 1840.21 (-1.75)
FT Non Financials 1841.6 (-1.6)
FT Financials 113.90 (+0.23)
FT Govt Debt 95.29 (-0.02)
Bargains 32607
Losses 4993
FT Volatility 200.50 (+0.20)
USX (Dow Jones) 1.5717 (+0.0017)
German Mark 2.2397 (+0.0011)
Deutsche Mark 113.90 (+0.23)
Bank of England official rate (p.m.) 5.00
EBC 1.1916
ECU 1.6025
RFX 150.7 Dec (3.2%) Jan 1997-100
RFX 149.6 Dec (3.0%) Jan 1997-100

Ballynary Ridge 6
Century Inns (20) 120
Dentons 74
Jupiter Split Cap 85
Jupiter Split Cap (US) 96
Jupiter Split Cap 69
MediaCity 60
NBN Palm W 8
Revolution Pic 105
Sci Sealing Sys (S) 53
SkyPharma 3 W 8
Viewlin 200

Berkeley Gp n/p (435) 86
Ecco Holdings n/p (28) 4
Oxford n/p (235) 104
Persora n/p (225) 4
Western Set n/p (14) 4

FTSE:
Trade Indemnity 57p (+0.04)
Racal 99p (+0.13)
Heron Group 57p (+0.19)
Mips 62p (+0.09)
Morse Bros 65p (+0.08)
Wentworth 26p (+0.02)
Sherwood Comp 175p (+0.10)
API 600p (+0.30)
General Cable 169p (+0.10)
Quadrant 224p (+0.11)
Boosey Hanks 58p (+0.05)
Eurolec 303p (+0.11)
Blue Circle 355p (+0.11)
Oxitec Int 425p (+0.10)
MAI 364p (+0.10)
Park Gp 472p (+0.13)
Oxitec Int 425p (+0.10)
Swa Pacific 88p (+0.12)
Farnell Elect 657p (+0.10)
EFF 182p (+0.04)
Celltech 518p (+0.04)
Vibroplant 86p (+0.11)
Concor 222p (+0.02)
Carmat 182p (+0.12)
Carmat 182p (+0.12)
Chiroscience 284p (+0.15)
AUT 485p (+0.03)
Closing Prices Page 27

Fighting on the forecourt

BIG oil has for years watched passively while the grocers stole their petrol retailing business and it was only a matter of time before they retaliated. The oil majors have only themselves to blame: decades of indifferent marketing has led the public to the correct conclusion that petrol is a commodity, differentiated only by price and the dinginess of the place where it is sold.

With new fancies and fancier forecourts, the majors are fighting back and the grocers should be worried at news that Esso is determined to match them on price. The margin on prices at the refinery gate is water thin so oil companies desperately need successful retail outlets to show a profit on their downstream activities.

There was a time when grocers claimed to earn little from petrol retailing — merely a

draw for the stores, they said — but for Tesco and Sainsbury, volumes are so large they now earn big bucks. Grocers have a competitive advantage: unlike the oil companies, they pay no rent, and NatWest Securities reckons that Tesco earns about £70 million from its 245 sites. These profits are now under threat.

Tesco's margin on a 53p litre of unleaded petrol is probably about 3p, suggesting that a small price reduction could wipe out the grocer's profits. In response to Esso's threat, Tesco affirmed its commitment to remain competitive, but significantly, the grocer has refrained so far from retaliating with a price cut. With sales growth slowing and grocery margins shrinking, Tesco can ill afford losses on the forecourt. The grocer may therefore be tempted to give some volume back to big oil to preserve its profits.

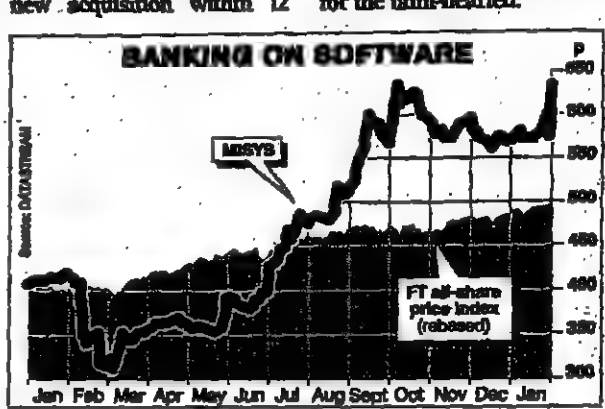
Misys

MANAGERS of the de-motivated Hanson could do worse than take a look at Misys, the computer software company, for lessons on how to run a more focused company. Kevin Lomax, himself a Hanson alumna, has rapidly built a £500 million business, using Hanson-like acquisitive skills, but with a much tighter focus.

Misys concentrates on applications software for the banking and insurance industries. ACT, a £193 million purchase last year, has bedded in well in spite of market concern at the time, and contributed most of the 71 per cent jump in profits at the half-year. Mr Lomax says bullishly about a strong second half that should see full-year profits of about £50 million, putting Misys on a

Banking on software

manageable earnings multiple of 15. Again Hanson-like acquisitions are behind the Misys motor. Profits from existing businesses actually fell over the half-year. Questions have been raised about the company's ability to grow without further corporate deals, and the market is hoping for a new acquisition within 12



Trade Indemnity

THE profit record of Trade Indemnity tells a tale of a cyclical market, and the 33 per cent premium being offered by SEAC for the company suggests that the market is peaking. However, the largest French provider of credit reinsurance is becoming increasingly international and therefore wants to join forces with Trade Indemnity.

Both companies are targeting multinational which depend on their credit insurers for reliable and speedy information. That means investment in expensive information technology, favouring larger groups.

Big bad-debt provisions hurt Trade Indemnity during the recession, but analysts believe 1995's pre-tax profit, which is based on 1992 underwriting, should be about £20 million, compared with just £5 million in 1994.

SEAC's £177 million offer looks generous compared

Regent Corp

REGENT Corporation revealed yesterday the immediate departure of Chris Johnson, its deputy chairman, and Carl Turpin, its chief executive.

The company also revealed that £1.4 million, a sum equal to half of the householder's market capitalisation, has gone through write offs or provisions.

Shareholders will have few qualms about raising their

voices

Last December, they contributed an equivalent sum in a placing and open offer — the emergency share issue was intended to stave off a liquidity crisis caused by poor sales.

None of this came to light at the time of the placing last December.

The £1.4 million apparently relates to the valuation of work in progress. Regent has changed its auditor from Stoy Hayward in London to Stoy Hayward in Rochdale. The Northern firm, a separate partnership but part of the national Stoy Hayward organisation, now has the pleasure of reviewing the work of its London brethren.

For shareholders, there is some hope. Regent is in talks with a private householder which could lead to a reverse takeover. The recently departed directors joined the company via a similar route in 1993 so investors would be wise to remain sceptical.

EDITED BY CARL MORTIMER

LONDON COMMODITY EXCHANGE

Commodity	Price	Change
Mar 96	916.913	May 1088.800
Mar 96	916.913	May 1088.800
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FT-SE 100

Commodity	Price	Change
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Previous open interest: 2513	Jun 96 --	95.57	95.63	95.57	95.61	1379
Euro Swiss Franc	Mar 96 --	96.21	96.26	96.15	96.24	6026
Previous open interest: 60843	Jun 96 --	96.15	96.19	96.14	96.17	4070
Italian Govt Bond	Mar 96 --	112.70	113.09	112.60	112.79	50877
Previous open interest: 66870	Jun 96 --	112.65	112.86	112.66	112.87	1476

THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Crash worries Wall Street

SORRY to shock you while the Dow Jones hits fresh highs, but there has been a nasty crash affecting Wall Street.

"Charging Bull", the 7,000lb 16-foot statue by Arturo DiModica, so loved of market folk and which, until 1989, was sited in front of the New York Stock Exchange, has been cruelly struck by a station wagon and damaged.

Traders, fearing portents, are aghast that the statue, relocated on Broadway, was knocked 7½ ft south of its moorings, and that the bull's front leglock has been put out of joint.

A New York policeman noted that "Charging Bull" had been pushed just a few more inches, "a steel stanchion would have demolished the animal's manhood".

The driver, who was unhurt but whose car bumper was demolished, said his brakes failed.

Flowers have been laid at the plinth to wish the bull, and the market, better.



"Might be asthma, but I think we've caught a cold"

Parc life blur

THE night with analysts held by Scottish & Newcastle at its Centre Parc village in Wiltshire (yesterday to be some fun after all. A mystery voice tells me it was so good that after a 4am finish, 13 missed their morning train back to London, ten missed their lunchtime train, and one senior S&N man was thought to have been face down in a ditch. My (sober) contact assures me "I did learn a lot about the group". The shares rose 10p to 644p.

Bloomin' error

WHEN your bank sends flowers, you know their mistake is serious. A trainee at a City law firm was somewhat non-plussed to receive a rather down-market bunch of cream and peach carnations from her bank manager at Barclays. "Quite revolting," was her response. Even worse, the skinny bouquet arrived at work for all to see. The card read: "We apologise for the standing order error." Some error! She couldn't get access to her funds for three weeks, which is 20 days longer than the flowers are likely to last.

In the swim

THE Lord Mayor of London, a keen swimmer, is calling on as many as possible to take part in a City Dip. The Corporation of London's annual charity swim takes place at the Golden Lane recreation centre, Golden Lane, on March 1 and 2, in aid of the St John Ambulance Brigade. City teams are welcome. Last year, the event raised £7,000.

Knockdown?

AFTER British Coal's lengthy search for a buyer for CINMan, its pension fund management business, hit a brick wall yesterday, the pressure will be on to find a quick fix. The company, which has steadily been selling all assets since privatisation, will be without a home from July — the date of a demolition order on its headquarters.

COLIN CAMPBELL



Training ground: if the Railtrack flotation in May is successful, the scope for putting privatisation into reverse will largely disappear

A method is emerging from 'madness' of the rail gamble

As the first privately owned trains begin operating, Jonathan Prynn sees cause for cautious optimism

THIS afternoon Chris Kinchin-Smith will attend the last board meeting of LTS Rail, the British Rail subsidiary that runs commuter trains between London's Fenchurch Street, Southend and Tilbury.

Later in the day, John Welby, the BR chairman, will give a short talk at Southend, wishing him and his colleagues the best of luck in the brave new world of the privatised railways.

When the 0535 pulls out of Shoeburyness bound for London in the pre-dawn of Sunday morning it will be the first privately-operated scheduled train on the line for more than 48 years.

It will miss the record books by 20 minutes as the 5.10 from Twickenham, operated by South West Trains, qualifies as the first privatised train in the country. Nevertheless, it will be an emotional moment for Mr Kinchin-Smith, who has headed LTS through the most turbulent three years on the railways for half a century.

Mr Kinchin-Smith is fitting with ideas about how to transform the service once known as the "miserable line" — radio communication between every driver and the control centre at Uppminster, credit-card ticket machines, even a satellite "global positioning system" so that every train on the line can be located to the centimetre.

Autonomy gives him and his team freedom to experiment, while his personal financial commitment to the buyout means that far more than his next promotion is on the line if the franchise does not perform. In his hands and those of the other first franchise heads rests the future of the Government's boldest privatisation.

Privatisation remains a huge political gamble. Its complexity makes it a mystery to all but a handful of officials, politicians and City folk, and a sitting duck for its opponents. Few, if any, benefits have yet flowed through to the travelling public, though they are all too well aware of the absurdities. The railway industry subsidy has doubled. It could still prove the disastrously wrong sort of privatisation.

Aid yet, and yet... As the details of the new structure become clearer, the fiendish method in the madness is beginning to emerge. Impressive local managers, who for decades have laboured under the stifling corporatism of a state monopoly, are suddenly finding themselves liberated.

Investment plans that could see a transformation of chronically underfunded lines like the London Tilbury and Southend over the next decade, have been drawn up and costed. Proper financial accountability is being established for the first time since nationalisation. Performance contracts set up to provide incentives for the train operators, Railtrack and the maintenance firms should deliver improvements in service.

The detailed thinking that has gone into the new structure is astonishing. For example, every three a passenger train anywhere in the country

fails three minutes behind its scheduled timetable, a mini-inquiry is automatically triggered and "blame" for the delay attributed to the responsible party.

If the operator is found guilty, passengers benefit through lower ticket prices. If Railtrack is to blame, the system's architects are adamant it will work. Perhaps.

This year is the crunch. Although 32 former BR companies have already been sold off, raising more than £2 billion, it is the performance of the train operators and Railtrack that will determine whether privatisation is judged a success or failure.

The three franchises being launched this weekend, LTS Rail, Great Western (both awarded to management teams) and South West Trains (won by Stagecoach), will be

followed by four more in June, another two in September and at least two more later in the autumn. If ScotRail can resolve its problems with the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority, a total of 12 out of the 25 franchises, representing perhaps two-thirds of passenger revenue, will have been handed over to private operators by the year end.

Railtrack is due to go to the stock market in May. For all Labour's attempts to intimidate the City and scupper the sale, the chances are that it will get under way. To pull the plug at this stage would be a political disaster of unthinkable magnitude. Once the flotation is a fact Labour's game is up. Railtrack is the keystone of privatisation and once in the hands of millions of private investors, the sell-off will become a legal and financial nightmare to dismantle.

A range of policy ideas is still being considered by Clare Short, the Shadow Transport Secretary, although the range of options is rapidly narrowing. John Prescott, deputy party leader, who has headed a committee looking at railway policy, is said to favour taking back Railtrack into public ownership in reverse salami style — slice by slice — in return for subsidy.

The proposal begs questions. How would the Government buy back the shares? In the market, forcing up their value like a hostile takeover bidder? By making Railtrack issue new stock, diluting the value of small shareholders, including thousands of employees? And why would the Government want to pay twice, once in subsidy and again for the equity?

A similar Labour plan to take over the National Grid, thereby restoring government "control" to the electricity industry, was floated and eventually ditched before the 1992 election. Labour will argue that Railtrack is different because it will be the only subsidised private utility.



Prescott favours return to public ownership

Companies will only grow if treated as customers by DTI

From R.J. Jackson
Sir, In today's fiercely contested markets, the constant drive to improve competitiveness is engrained in our minds. Having survived a very severe recession, an achievement in itself, as manufacturers we well understand the need to be responsive to market conditions and to be both efficient and flexible in our operating methods.

Whilst benchmarking may provide useful targets for some small manufacturers to aim at, the vast majority of us will struggle to find the resources and expertise to gain promotion to the premier

league of "world class". This is where the DTI and their agents, the training and enterprise councils and Business Links have such a vital role to play. If it is truly the DTI's mission to help us to gain promotion, then we must be treated as their customers and they should start benchmarking their own performance. The results will disappoint them as they fail to reach much of their market and many of the companies they do contact find their programmes are prescriptive or inappropriate and immersed in bureaucracy.

The DTI would do well to

act on the hard lessons we have learnt. So we trust that in the third White Paper announced by Heseltine, the DTI will be more responsive to manufacturers' needs by introducing both practical and flexible measures which will encourage more of us to achieve promotion to "world class". Yours faithfully, R.J. JACKSON, Director, South London Manufacturers Forum, Managing director, HWWallace, 172 St James's Road, Croydon.

Bank rates are root of decline

From Mr Richard Whatmoor
Sir, I noted with astonishment Lloyds Bank interest rates notification for business customers on January 3. From this it would appear that the "thoroughbred bank" is lending to small businesses at 13.2 per cent while borrowing from depositors at about 3.5 per cent. Do we have to look any further for the root causes of our traumatic economic decline over the recent past, with the exception, of course, of the excellent concurrent performance of bank profits? Yours faithfully, RICHARD WHATMOOR, 43 Lancaster Rd, London W1.

Gloomy over growth

From Mr Derek Bloom
Sir, Pennington believes that "the annual bill for basic state pensions will rise from £26 billion to £42 billion" by 2030, a compound growth of only 1.4 per cent per year. He must have a very gloomy view of the prospects for economic growth for that to be unsustainable. Yours faithfully, DEREK BLOOM, 47 Old Church Street, SW3.

Howard's way may lead to less regulation

Both sides in Australia's election have similar policies, says Rachel Bridge

THE announcement of the Australian Federal election during the Australia Day long weekend did not please many. It did, however, delight Australia's business community, not only ending months of uncertainty but also coming amid a growing likelihood that the election — set for March 2 — could spell a change of government for the first time in 13 years.

With the latest polls showing a clear lead for John Howard, leader of the opposition Liberal Party, political experts agree that Paul Keating has a lot of catching up to do over the next four weeks if he is to retain power. The perception in the markets is that a win for the coalition led by the Liberals would lead to a freer business environment combined with a more conservative fiscal approach.

Peter Munckton, an economist at Bankers Trust in Sydney, explains: "A coalition government is seen as being much more stock market friendly. For a start, they are going to be tough on inflation, which is positive. They are also more likely to run a tighter fiscal budget than a Labor government, a second positive. Together with the fact that they are likely to encourage greater deregulation in the labour market by reducing union influence, it all adds up to greater business confidence."

Crucially for potential foreign investors, Mr Howard has also indicated that he intends to make the existing rules on foreign investment more transparent, and analysts believe that he is likely to show greater leniency towards takeovers and mergers too. In addition, Mr Howard has pledged to sell off a third of Telstra, Australia's national phone company, something which Mr Keating has so far refused to contemplate.

The Australian stock market has not been slow to show its enthusiasm for a coalition government, rising 34.6 points in three days to a two-year high of 2285.5. It fell three points yesterday in profit taking.

Top of the activity list have been shares in media stocks, which have soared in the belief that a coalition government would relax the

present cross-media ownership rules — paving the way in particular for Kerry Packard, who controls the Nine Network television company, to bid for Fairfax, Australia's oldest newspaper group, without having to give up his TV holdings. Mr Packard, whose Publishing and Broadcasting Group has a 17 per cent stake in Fairfax, has made no secret of his desire to take control of the newspaper publisher, clashing publicly with Mr Keating a year ago over the rules that have so far prevented him from doing so.

The banking sector, too, has come under the spotlight, amid speculation that a coalition government might look more favourably at a merger of two of the country's leading banks and the takeover of some smaller ones. Shares in ANZ and Westpac, seen as the most susceptible targets, have soared, while shares in National Australia Bank, which owns Yorkshire Bank, and Clydesdale Bank in Britain, have risen in the belief that it could be a possible predator.

Detractors however argue that little of substance will change even if Mr Howard does win power on March 2.

pointing out that the policies he has unveiled so far show a remarkable similarity to those of the incumbent Government. Indeed, some analysts argue that a coalition win could result in greater industrial unrest because they will be less able to get the co-operation of Australia's powerful unions than Labor.

Alex Harabopoulos, chief economist at GIO Australia, said: "There's a lot of similarities between the two. They both want to see the underlying inflation rate between 2 and 3 per cent, they both want to see the budget deficit improved and they both want to see Australia becoming more productive."

One Sydney economist agrees, saying: "There is much talk about a coalition government being better for business, being more stock market friendly. But, in terms of the broader economic policies and the economic outcomes, both sides have very similar views. It's a bit like Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

SELECT INDUSTRIES PLC CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Directors of Select announce that for the six months ended 31st December 1995 the unaudited consolidated loss amounted to £55,000 on turnover of £456,000 compared with a loss of £931,000 on turnover of £597,000 for the six months ended 31st December 1994. Included in this loss are non-recurring costs of £56,000 for further restructuring of the Group's operations and for the capital reduction which was approved by shareholders in October 1995.

As previously reported to shareholders, the Directors have taken a number of initiatives to improve the Group's performance by focusing on higher margin sales and by cutting operating and overhead costs. AirBoss Grand Engagement Plc, Select's UK operating subsidiary, is now sourcing the majority of its rubber tyres at favourable prices from the new facility in Michigan USA of its affiliate company, AirBoss of America Corp. The improved results for the six month period reflect the successful implementation of these initiatives.

At 31st December 1995 liquid assets of the Select Group amounted to £5.1 million, principally comprising cash of £4.7 million. In view of the Company's sound financial position and its available capital less losses of £86 million, the Directors are investigating suitable acquisition prospects for the Company.

Simon Raynaud
Chairman
1st February 1996

INTERIM STATEMENT

Unaudited results for the six months ended 31st December 1995

	Six Months Ended 31st December 1995	Six Months Ended 31st December 1994
	£'000	£'000
Turnover	456	597
Cost of sales	(350)	(526)
Gross profit	106	71
Net operating expenses	(438)	(1,093)
Operating loss	(332)	(1,022)
Interest receivable	163	101
Amounts realised on disposals (written off) of investments	114	(10)
Loss on ordinary activities before taxation	(55)	(931)
Taxation	—	—
Loss attributable to shareholders	(55)	(931)
Loss per share	(0.02)p	(0.41)p
Interim dividend per share	—	—

The financial information included in this document does not comprise statutory accounts within the meaning of Section 240 of the Companies Act 1985. The statutory accounts for the year ended 30th June 1995, on which the auditors have given an unqualified opinion, have been filed with the Registrar of Companies. The interim financial information is unaudited.

The comparative figures previously reported for the half year to 31st December 1994 have been restated in accordance with the change in accounting policy in respect of goodwill disclosed in the statutory accounts for the year ended 30th June 1995. In years previous to 30th June 1995, goodwill was, depending on the circumstances, either taken direct to reserves in the period of acquisition or capitalised and amortised over its useful economic life. In the year to 30th June 1995 this policy was revised to take goodwill directly to reserves in the year of acquisition. As a result of this change in accounting policy, the comparative figures previously reported to 31st December 1994 have been restated to reflect the adjustment necessary to eliminate the amortisation charge in the six months to that date on goodwill previously capitalised of £86,000.

Oil and gas output at ten-year record

By MARTIN BARROW

BRITAIN'S oil and gas production reached its highest level last year, according to the Royal Bank of Scotland's oil and gas index.

Oil output grew 2 per cent during the year to the highest level for more than a decade. Average daily production reached 2.54 million barrels per day (bpd), just below the previous highest level of 2.59 million barrels, which was reached in 1985. During the

year as a whole the UK's North Sea oilfields produced 927 million barrels, equivalent to 360 gallons for every man, woman and child in Britain.

Britain's gas output rose even faster, increasing by 8 per cent to a record high. This was achieved despite subdued gas demand for heating for much of the year.

The upsurge in output was assisted by the growth in demand from new gas-fired

power stations and because of the extremely cold period in December. Gas production during the month was 34 per cent higher than one year ago, helped also by the availability of cheap gas supplies.

Mark Shea, the Royal Bank's energy economist, said: "These figures confirm the success of the oil industry in using new lower cost technologies, which make it possible to develop successfully the new smaller fields."

"They also reflect the success of the industry in extending the life of existing fields and recovering a much higher proportion of their overall reserves than was originally thought possible. I believe that this success will continue and that we will see further production increases both this year and next."

The index shows that North Sea oil output was down again in January by nearly 39,000 bpd to an average 2.63 million bpd. But gas production rose again to the highest level since the index was launched in 1991.

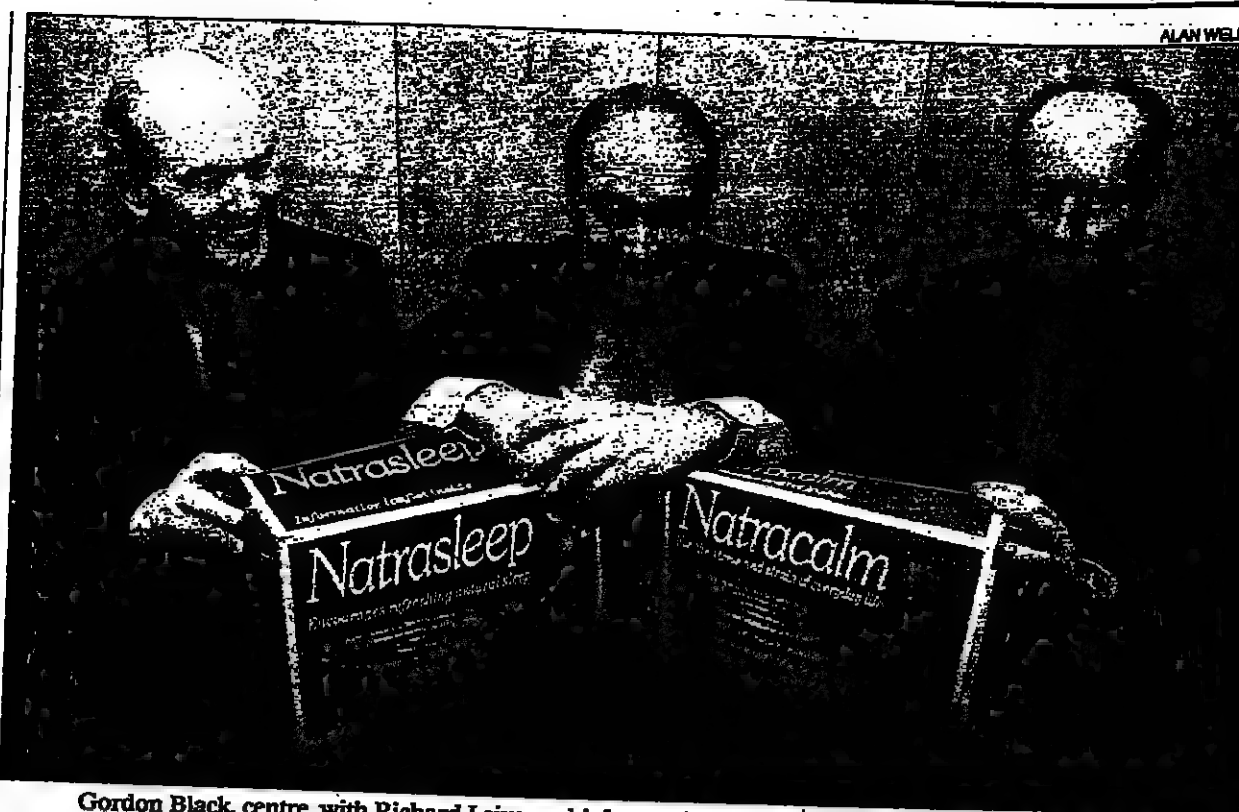
equivalent of 77 million barrels per day, compared to total world oil consumption and production of 70 million barrels per day.

Brent crude oil futures traded almost 1.1 million contracts last month, an increase of 10 per cent over the previous record set in January 1995 and the first time that more than one million contracts have been traded in a single month.

Peak trading month for Petroleum Exchange

VOLATILE oil prices, caused by the cold snap and short stock position in northern Europe, underpinned a record month of trading on the International Petroleum Exchange in London in January (writes Martin Barrow).

A total of 1.69 million contracts were traded, an increase of 16 per cent over the previous high set in November 1993. This represents the



Gordon Black, centre, with Richard Leivers, chief executive, left, and Stephen Lister, finance director

Sales raise interim at Peter Black

PETER BLACK, the toiletries and cosmetics company that supplies Marks and Spencer, achieved an 8.1 per cent increase in profits in the first half of the current year (Martin Barrow writes).

At the pre-tax level profits eased to £8.2 million from £8.4 million in the six months to December 2, although compa-

table results for the previous year included a £627,000 surplus from the sale of a discontinued operation.

Group turnover was almost unchanged at £69.3 million, compared with £69.9 million, but like-for-like sales were up 6.8 per cent. Net margins on continuing businesses increased to 11.8

per cent from 10.9 per cent. Gordon Black, chairman, said: "We remain confident that the current progressive trend can be maintained."

The interim dividend rises 8.7 per cent to 1.37p a share from 1.26p, to be paid April 30. Earnings were 10.13p a share (9.52p). The shares rose 3p to 275p.

ICI plans expansion and jobs

By OUR BUSINESS STAFF

ICI is to invest £60 million in building a new melinex polyester film plant alongside its existing plants at Dumfries, creating 50 permanent jobs in the area and a further 200 during construction.

The plant will add an extra 20,000 tonnes a year to the company's existing world capacity of more than 100,000 tonnes. The plant should come on stream during 1997 and will mainly supply the packaging industry.

Separately, ICI has agreed an outsourcing deal worth more than £75 million over five years with Origin involving about 400 staff in the UK and Holland.

Origin, in which Philips Communications has an 82 per cent interest, will take over ICI's mainframe and legacy applications and management of some other mid-range systems, together with ICI's data centres at Runcorn, Cheshire and in Rokenbury in The Netherlands.

The agreement involves two ICI divisions - ICI Systems and TASC (Telecoms and Systems Computing), which manages ICI's mainframe computing.

Profits warning rocks ERF shares

By MARTIN BARROW

SHARES in ERF Holdings, one of Britain's last surviving independent truck manufacturers, fell to a three-year low yesterday after the company gave a warning that annual profits would be significantly below current forecasts.

ERF said that, despite a strong first half, order intake slowed markedly in December and January, forcing it to introduce short-time working at its plants. Industry analysts estimate that demand for trucks has declined by about 40 per cent since the autumn.

Shares in ERF fell to 182p from 342p after the announcement, with pre-tax profit forecasts downgraded to just £1.6 million for the year to March 31, compared with the £2.3 million profit reported in the previous 12 months. The company had previously expected profits of about £2.6 million.

ERF said, however, that order intake has seen some

recovery and the export business continues to improve, particularly in Africa.

Separately, the company is seeking alternative and additional sources of term finance, with new arrangements expected to be in place within a few months.

Its principal banker has indicated that overdraft facilities are available to March 31, 1997, and a medium-term loan of £4 million repayable in January 1998. The profit warning was accompanied by details of a restructuring of the company's interests in South Africa.

Dorbyl, a South African engineering company, is to take a 70 per cent interest in ERF South Africa (ERFSA), acquiring shares from the country's Industrial Development Corporation and the management. ERF's interest will fall from 56.1 per cent to 30 per cent.

Harrisons buys US company

By OUR CITY STAFF

HARRISONS & Crosfield, the chemicals and building materials company, has acquired Daniel Products, an American specialty chemicals company, for about \$30 million.

Daniel, based in New Jersey, develops and manufactures pigments and other chemicals used in paints and coatings. The company claims particular expertise in environmentally friendly water-borne and high solid content products.

In 1994 the company earned profits of \$3.1 million before interest and tax on turnover of \$24.3 million. About 30 per cent of sales are destined for markets outside the US.

H&C said its international position would help Daniel to generate more sales, while it would gain from the acquired group's technological expertise. Bill Turcan, chief executive, said further acquisitions were possible.

Ocean sells control of laboratories

By OUR CITY STAFF

OCEAN GROUP, the industrial and distribution services company, will incur a £29 million charge after selling a majority interest in NET, its American environmental testing business, to its managers.

NET's laboratories provide analytical services to industry and public authorities. It has suffered because of a decline in demand for its services, after a reduction in federal support, resulting in intense price competition. In the first half, NET lost £300,000, following a loss of £2.8 million after exceptional costs for all of 1994.

The management buy-out team is led by David Caspersen, president of NET. Ocean has sold 60 per cent of NET's equity for nominal consideration. Ocean has also provided in full against its remaining investment and for guarantees. This provision of £12.5 million, in addition to £16.5 million of goodwill previously written off to reserves upon acquisition.

Australia buys on BankWest's debut

FROM RACHEL BRIDGE IN SYDNEY

THE Bank of Scotland received an overwhelming seal of approval from Australian investors yesterday as shares in BankWest, its new acquisition, soared to a 26 per cent premium on its first day of trading on the Australian stock exchange.

Shares in BankWest, in which Bank of Scotland retains a 51 per cent controlling stake, rose 53 cents to A\$2.58 (£1.27), with more than 38 million shares changing hands. Ian MacKenzie, chairman of BankWest, said: "I think the public demand for the stock reflects the confidence brought by the anchor shareholder, which has a great deal of expertise and experience in banking."

Yesterday's rise in BankWest shares, which was

far greater than analysts had expected, values Bank of Scotland's stake, which it acquired for a net A\$462 million (£229 million), at more than A\$590 million.

The Bank of Scotland, which agreed to sell down 49 per cent of BankWest when it acquired the bank from the Western Australian government in December, had been forced to close the public share offer more than three weeks early and scale back allocations in the face of overwhelming demand.

Fraser Campbell, Bank of Scotland's general manager for Australasian operations, said BankWest had produced outstanding results in the past few years and was now clearly one of the best performing banks in Australia.

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■ VISUAL ART

Francis Bacon by himself: an unknown self-portrait goes on show for the first time



■ THEATRE 1

A musical set on Death Row? Yes, *Fields of Ambrosia* is as ghastly as it sounds

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ THEATRE 2

... but young Nick Grosso's *Sweetheart* delves subtly into a world of loveless bed-hopping



■ MUSIC

Fearless and triumphant: Thomas Quasthoff impresses in a challenging Wigmore recital

How good is the early self-portrait by Francis Bacon that has come to light after 66 years? And where was it found?

Face to face with young genius?

The discovery, announced yesterday, of an early self-portrait by Francis Bacon, who died in 1992, is undoubtedly a major event. The artist made sure that few of the pictures he painted before 1944, when he was 35, have survived. In that decisive year, Bacon completed his first triptych — the enormously disturbing *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, now in the Tate.

Much of the work he produced before then was destroyed by the artist. Indeed, only 14 of the pictures Bacon painted prior to the triptych are reproduced in Ronald Alley's catalogue raisonné of the artist's oeuvre. They give a desperately fragmented idea of his youthful development, and not one is a painted self-portrait.

That is what makes this new discovery so valuable. The painting is probably identifiable as the self-portrait Bacon exhibited in his studio, with a substantial 45-guinea price-tag, in November 1930. Painted on a canvas board with pinholes in the corners, it is a small work, but surprisingly powerful.

Viewed in near-silhouette against a pale, freshly brushed background, Bacon's purplish face looks like a boxer's after a bruising fight. His nose seems flattened. Both eyes appear narrowed to the point of closure, reduced to little more than slits. His cheeks look raw, and his lower lip strangely swollen.

But the pummelled state of his flesh, possibly painted in part with his fingers, does not mean that the portrait lacks vitality. On the contrary: the eyebrows rise up in broad strokes, giving his face the exclamatory vigour of a clown in full make-up. Anarchic humour always played a vital role in Bacon's outlook, and the centre-parted hair springs out, to left and right, with irreverent dynamism. Crude it may be compared with his later technical sophistication. But the energy is there in awesome abundance, and so is the readiness to twist a human face like rubber.

How does this discovery tally with the early Bacons that we already know? Some are Cubist studies of Painted Screens, showing the kind of elegant, decorative work produced by "Bacon" when he launched himself, around 1930, as an interior decorator and furniture designer. *The Studio*, an influential art magazine, reproduced several photographs of his Queensberry Mews studio in London. Here, against cool white walls, the 21-year-old Bacon displayed Cubist wall-hangings, abstract rugs and gleaming metal tables and chairs. They all proclaimed his allegiance to the modern movement, and testified to his precocious talents as a designer. And indeed, for a while, Bacon prospered in that trade. R.A. Butler commissioned him to design furnishings for his dining room.

But even at this stage, Bacon's real ambition was to succeed as a painter. Entirely self-taught, he always claimed that art school would have destroyed his individuality. In these early years, though, Bacon's lack of professional training made him feel curiously uncertain about his ability.

We will never know how many pictures he produced during the 1930s: but one in particular stands out — a *Crucifixion*, painted in 1933 for the leading collector Sir Michael Sadler. After buying an earlier picture from Bacon, Sadler had sent him an X-ray photograph of his skull from which to paint his portrait. Bacon placed the skull next to a figure of Christ hanging from an invisible cross, one half of his body painted in searing scarlet. No such colour envenoms the newly discovered self-portrait. Nevertheless it does show that Bacon was already prepared, even at this early stage, to take astonishing and even alarming liberties with anatomy. The wonder is that he took so long to develop fully the uncompromising vision announced here with such raw, embryonic strength.

RICHARD CORK



The newly revealed self-portrait: Bacon apparently kept it secretly for five decades and then gave it to a friend in the early 1980s

Portrait of a discovery

It was only through perseverance that the art writer Angus Stewart found Bacon's early self-portrait. As curator of the Francis Bacon and Henry Moore Exhibition at next month's Fine Art and Antiques Fair at Olympia, Stewart was doing research for the show when he traced the unknown work, painted in 1930.

"I knew there was a possibility of its existence, but Bacon hacked so much of his work to pieces you could never be sure that anything existed," says Stewart, who knew the artist over a period of 30 years. "When I managed to locate the catalogue for the November 1930 exhibition he held in his London studio, which lists a self-portrait, it made me wonder."

"In fact I thought I'd found one: but it turned out I was wrong. But I kept on: I was trying to find different things for this exhibition. I just kept looking and looking and looking. I continued to talk to people who said they knew nothing until eventually someone owned up."

The painting had been given by the artist to its present owner — a close friend of Bacon's — in the early Eighties. According to Stewart, it had been in Bacon's possession for the previous 30 years, although the artist was obviously not keen for the world to know of its existence. "When he was co-operating with Ronald Alley on the catalogue he edited in 1964 of Bacon's works at the Tate, the artist didn't mention it. He always maintained that his early works had been destroyed. I caught him out in telling another fib."

Twenty years later Bacon thought well enough of the self-portrait to give it away. "People who own a Bacon painting have a very deep relationship with it. Certainly in this particular case the owner was a friend of Bacon's: it was a gift which was very personal to him and he didn't broadcast the fact of his ownership."

"In the end he volunteered and brought the painting back into this country and said 'if you want it you can exhibit it'. It was an amazing kindness on his part. When I actually saw the painting, I was baffled. It was an amazing thing to see, a remarkable work."

The small self-portrait, measuring 15½ in by 11 in, will go on show to the public for six days from February 27 at the Olympia fair. After that it will be returned to its owner, who, adds Stewart, has no intention of selling it.

DEBRA CRAINE

THEATRE: Well-crafted study of the unwillingly promiscuous; musical about an executioner in shockingly bad taste

Men misbehaving badly

Nick Grosso's award-winning first play, *Peaches*, enjoyably traces the misfortunes of a group of lads who wanted to think they were having success with women but patently weren't. The 20-year-olds in his new piece are managing the sex all right but not the love part of it, and this troubles them more than they expected.

Lee's girlfriend Jane left him a year ago — for a man of 30, almost a pensioner — and he can't stop thinking of her. Davey has met a woman he does not instantly want to take to bed, because if something more serious is possible he would not want to upset his chances.

Charlie, the sweetheart of the title, mucks up his long-lasting love affair with Toni, but the memory of what he has lost spoils his nights with her successors.

Charlie is the one whose bed-hopping adventures Grosso shows us, in a sequence of scenes across London, with the postal districts flashed on to the rear wall. He chaps up Ruby at a club in NW1, lolls on her bed in NW8, goes to NW6 to argue with Toni, meets Davey in NW3.

The easy-flowing talk is totally convincing, with its repetitions and peppering of one-word sentences. Speeches of more than two sentences are rare. Yet this is a formalised dialogue, ingeniously bringing facts and feeling out of the chitchat.

The play is beautifully acted too, with a fine sense of the cautious sussing-out that goes on when a couple are on the verge of becoming better acquainted but aren't yet sure they want to be.

Sweetheart Royal Court Upstairs

Precise shifts of feeling, excellently paced in Roxana Silbert's production, are traced by Kate Beckinsale's Toni as she watches Charlie's self-absorbed dance, and silently leaves. At the end of the play you feel that Nicola Walker's Kelly, equally watchful, will soon be making the same decision.

Charlie is at odds with the work ethic, not wanting to commit himself to anything that changes the status quo. It sounds like laziness, and so it must be in part, a laziness to understand anything new, but Joe Duttine's performance shows an existential discon-

tentment seething beneath the charm.

Most of the people he meets work in television, and Grosso makes him say that people have to watch television in order to find out what it's like, and should therefore do the same with life. Blocked by this "therefore" he can do nothing but drift.

Grosso never patronises his characters. Davey (Darren Tighe), as ill-informed about the wider world as Charlie, deranges more epitaphs than anyone since Mrs Malaprop, but the comedy is affectionate. With this subtly structured 90-minute piece Grosso clears the hurdle of the second play, where so many young writers stumble.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Death and a midden

The Fields of
Ambrosia
Aldwych

reworking a 19th-century melodrama and, in the process, saying something serious about evil begetting evil. Call it good taste, call it the right tone, call it a basic moral sense: there is something missing in Joel Higgins and Martin Silvestri's tale of the genial executioner who, having amiably returned a hun-

dred males to their Maker, falls for his first female victim.

Consider what happens when Jonas, played by Higgins himself, tries to delay her death by hiding Old Reliable, as he calls his chair. Suspicious guards set on the assembled convicts, viciously beating and throttling and gouging out their eyes while the executioner has gleeful sex with Christine Andreas's Gretchen on a platform above. Or consider the scene in which the local mortician, a forlorn wimp whose smell of formaldehyde puts off women, keeps watch while scores of prisoners are off copulating with six exhausted whores. Grabbed and raped by homosexual convicts, he launches into a soaring sob-song that begins "if it ain't one thing it's another".

How on earth to make such stuff palatable? Higgins and Silvestri's solution is to give their show a folksy, jokey, aw-shucks feeling, supposedly in keeping with the period, which is 1918. No wonder they have problems assimilating the episode in which Gretchen prowls a cage festooned with men singing "hungry for you", or the one in which the chief warden intones "I figure your ass is too good to fry" and sexually assaults her.

Oddly, there is genuine talent on display. Silvestri can turn a breezy country tune. Higgins the librettist may have his limitations, but Higgins the actor has lots of laid-back assurance, and Andreas has a fine, pure voice. Yet if it is easy to see why both principals have strong Broadway credits, it is hard to understand why they are over here. What next — a hanging, gassing, shooting or lethal injection show? A new genre beckons: the Terminal Follies.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

HILARY FINCH

● Valerie Grove interviews Thomas Quasthoff, page 14

Heart and voice of solid oak

THOMAS QUASTHOFF began and ended his London debut recital, fearlessly and uncompromisingly, in at the deep end. It takes a brave man to start with Schubert's big three heavyweights, *Garymen, Grenzen der Menschheit* and *Prometheus*, and then to end with *Der Tod und das Mädchen* as his final encore. But Quasthoff is clearly a man of determination, and both his temperament and his voice, a sturdy oak of a bass-baritone, seemed ideally suited to these songs.

Later he was to tackle the equally daunting dramas of the *Erkennung* and *Der Zueignung*, *Heimliche Auforderung*, and *Die Nacht*, this, after all, was Schubert's birthday and there were to

In songs such as *Der Zwerg* and *Der Wanderer*, where the piano accompaniment plays such a crucial part in stage-management, Quasthoff was not helped by Charles Spencer's less than meticulously imagined playing. One longed for a great subtlety of both timbre and movement: Quasthoff's voice, more of the earth than of the air, nevertheless found its way into the spirit of *Der Musensohn* rather more nimbly than Spencer's fingers did.

The broader sweep of melody and the harmonic fervour of Richard Strauss, in *Zueignung*, *Heimliche Auforderung*, and *Die Nacht*, found a true soul mate in

Quasthoff. His skill in nourishing the long line and concentrating his own rapaciousness of intent into each phrase came clearly into its own in this repertoire.

Although this programme gave him little chance to show it, there is also, I suspect, a droll humour lurking somewhere there, and it surfaced delightfully in Hugo Wolf's *Storchenbotenschaft*, the song of the storks' visitation to the shepherd: a nod, a curtsy, and off they fly.

● Valerie Grove interviews Thomas Quasthoff, page 14

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CHOICE 1

Siobhan Davies is among those making dances for Spring Collection

VENUE: From tonight at the Place and South Bank

CHOICE 2

Twelfth Night, with Edward Petherbridge, is back at the RSC

VENUE: In preview at the Barbican from tomorrow

THE TIMES ARTS

CHOICE 3

John Osborne's The Entertainer takes the stage in Birmingham

VENUE: In preview at the Repertory

JAZZ

From Italy with charisma: Paolo Conte, advocate turned crooner, prepares for his Barbican date

Law of the jungle music

Clive Davis meets a legal eagle turned jazzman on the eve of his London visit

The city of Toulouse, known to its admirers as "la ville rose", has many architectural splendours. The Palais des Sports, a slab of New Brutalism ten minutes' walk from the Romanesque basilica of Saint Sernin, is not among them.

This bleak outcrop of wan municipal concrete forms the least suitable venue imaginable for a performer as subtle as Paolo Conte. Yet as the audience settles into regimented lines of plastic seats, the singer and his nine-piece band slowly transport us into a world of dreams, one part Harlem, one part Havana.

Jelly Roll Morton, self-styled "creator of jazz", once famously declared that all good New Orleans music required "a Spanish tinge". Conte, a devotee of the trinity of Morton, Ellington and Armstrong, takes the advice to heart. With their languid percussion, mournful accordion and saxophones, his tunes amount to much more than a token exercise in revivalism.

His raw, guttural voice and the melodies swirling around the Palais des Sports seem utterly contradictory. The simple yet effective lighting, the spots cascading onto individual soloists, adds immeasurably to the atmosphere.

All but unknown in Britain but adored on the Continent, the grey-haired lawyer-turned-bandleader from Asti performs at the Barbican Centre tomorrow. Though he spurns all showbiz niceties, seldom speaking to his audience and preferring to concentrate on his piano playing, he



Paolo Conte: the thinking woman's Julio Iglesias, and devotee of Duke Ellington

casts a curious spell over his public, whether or not they understand his decidedly elliptical Italian lyrics.

His rumpled, saturnine looks help, of course, at a superficial level Conte is the thinking woman's Julio Iglesias. But his charisma goes well beyond physical nuances. He possesses the rare ability to evoke a world of hallucinations, half-consummated love affairs and long, solitary nights in a darkened bar. Had he been born a century and a half ago, he would surely have been a poet.

In his publicity shots, and on the cover of his latest album *Una faccia in prestito* (A Face on Loan) — released on the East-West label — the fur-

rowed Conte brow is well to the fore. Here is a loner, you are led to believe, who never deigns to smile. But away from the stage, seated in his dressing room before his concert, he reveals a far more jovial side to his character. He would, you sense, make good company well into the early hours over a bottle of red wine.

Though the occasional English phrase crops up in his songs — one weird, Rats Waller-like interlude goes under the title *Don't Throw It in the WC* — Conte does not speak the language. This, he explains through his interpreter, he regards as a grievous failing. After all, he loves the music of Elgar and the poetry of Keats, and English is, he feels,

the ideal vehicle for his style of popular song. "Italian is a beautiful language, but it's not very rhythmic. English swings much more easily," he says. "You have shorter words. They flow better."

His international success took him somewhat by surprise. He notes that audiences outside his native land approach his work from a slightly different angle. "In Italy people are drawn to my work through the words. Elsewhere they don't always understand the lyrics, but the music is more important anyway. So, that way, they still capture the spirit of the song."

Conte's history offers hope for any frustrated artist trapped in a pin-stripe suit.

For years he practised civil law in his family's firm, while playing piano in his free time. His first instrument, back in the 1950s, was actually the vibraphone; for a while he dreamed of becoming Piedmont's answer to Lionel Hampton or Milt Jackson. He recorded a single with a quartet, without much success. Subsequent groups, with such Italian names as the Barrehouse Jazz Band proved equally unsuccessful.

He turned to writing songs, and in the late 1960s one of his compositions *Azzurro* was a hit for the singer Adriano Celentano. More successes followed, in Italy and France, and he hit the jackpot with a number for Johnny Hallyday, the air-brushed Elvis Presley of the French-speaking world. Emboldened, Conte plucked up the courage to try his hand as a vocalist.

In concert, his plish waltzers far and wide on occasion, appearing to leave his hand cruising in some distant key. People often compare his gravelly delivery to that of Tom Waits: in the band arrangements there is a trace of the songs of Brecht and Weill. Mention this to him and he accepts the compliment. Otherwise he refuses to delve too deep into the matter of influences. All he will say is that he loves classical music, canzonets and the popular song of South America. And jazz, of course, especially the vintage stuff from the 1930s, when Duke Ellington was still turning out exotic, minor-key "jungle music" at the Cotton Club.

At Toulouse, after a two-hour set including an epic tango encore, he gives a casual wave and disappears into the wings. Strange to think that, as a solo artist, Conte was not exactly an overnight success. He was well into his fifties before he finally renounced the Bar. Yet who now could tell that he was ever a lawyer? That, he says with a broad smile, is because the artistic life has won.

Paolo Conte is at the Barbican (0171-438 8891) tomorrow, 8pm

Electric and eclectic

Mike Gibbs/Creative Jazz Orchestra Queen Elizabeth Hall

by Charles Ives, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Oliver Knussen. A couple of Gibbs pieces, the hauntingly contemplative *Lady Macbeth* in *Memoirs* and the densely percussive *Kozzsa*, the latter's roots firmly planted in Gibbs' native Zimbabwean soil, showed off the orchestra in relatively straightforward jazz big-band mode, its approach tight yet supple, its cohesive ensemble skills nicely balanced against individual solo virtuosity.

The following Turnage piece, however, the four-part *Her Anxiety*, neatly

demonstrated just how mutually beneficial a jazz/classical collaboration can be in the right hands. In both this and a later Turnage piece, *Momentum*, Gibbs somehow managed to retain the compositions' considerable complexities while opening them up at crucial points to cogent jazz improvisations from reeds player Iain Dixon and guitarist Mike Walker.

The material by Charles Ives — honoured for his eccentric eclecticism long before Post-Modernism rendered his species of genre-blurring but

compulsory — fared equally well under Gibbs' sensitive handling. Whether drawing out all the faintly soured jauntness in *Barn Dance* and *Charlie Rautage* or luxuriating in the "cosmic landscape" conjured up by *The Unanswered Question*, Gibbs created — as his great inspiration Gil Evans always managed to do — a wholly convincing and consistent sound world.

Such intelligent cohesiveness, embracing the most rousing Mingusian rambunctiousness at one extreme and the subtlest impressionistic delicacy at the other, ensured that while the whole performance was thoroughly imbued with jazz essence of Gibbs, no violence was done to the integrity and spirit of the original compositions.

CHRIS PARKER

LONDON

SPRING COLLECTION The South Bank Centre and the Place Theatre offer a marathon weekend of some of the best of British contemporary dance. There are established creators such as Jonathan Burrows, Siobhan Davies, Shobana Jeyasingh and Mark Seiden, alongside young hopefuls including Mark Bruce. The scheduling wisely allows time to get from one venue to another.

Place, Duke's Road, WC1 0171-387 0031. Tonight, 8pm, Sat, 10pm and Sun, 11am. South Bank, SE1 0171-429 4242. Purcell Room, Sat, 3.30pm; CEH, Sat, 7.45pm; Sun, 3pm.

TWELFTH NIGHT Ian Judge's colourful production returns for a third season, with Edward Petherbridge as Malvolio and Emily Joyce as Viola. Barbican, St. Martin's Lane, WC2 0171-438 8891. Preview tomorrow-Wed and Feb 14 7.15pm; opens Feb 15. 8pm.

RUBY TURNER It's standing room only for tonight's show by the sultry soul diva, currently celebrating the release of her new album *Realistic Music*. Jazz Café, 15a Parkway, NW1 0171-915 5000. Doors open 7pm.

ELSEWHERE

BIRMINGHAM David Price plays the falling music hall repertoire, mourning the fall of the British Empire, in John

WEEKEND CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Kate Anderson

Osborne's The Entertainer Transfers to Leeds in March. Contemporary Square (0121-236 4455). Preview tonight, 8pm. Feb 6, and Mar 2. 8pm. Also in Birmingham: The Creative Jazz Orchestra returns tomorrow with Mike Gibbs's arrangements of Mark-Anthony Turnage and Charles Ives pieces. See review, right.

Julian Beal Hall, *Conversations* (01454 512000). Sat, 7.30pm.

WATFORD Clive Davis returns to the stage. A new London move in a small family home but proves to harbour a horrific secret — a chilling modern mystery that has won critical accolades. Not suitable for children under 15. Palace, Watford Road (01923 225 871). Preview tonight, Sat, 8pm; Mon, 7.45pm. Opens Tue, until Feb 24. 8pm.

LONDON GALLERIES

Barbican Daughter of the Creator of the Ballet Russes (0171-438 8891). British Museum, *William de Wrotham* (0171-438 8891). National Gallery, *Paintings from the National Trust House* (0171-747 2885). National Portrait Gallery, *Richard and Maria Conway* (0171-306 0025). Sculpture, *John Ruskin* (0171-722 9079). Tate, *St. Woodrow* 15 bronze statues (0171-587 3000). V & A, *John Arden* (0171-438 8891). Whitechapel, *Ena Nole* (0171-438 8891).

THE SHAKESPEARE REVUE

A weekly evening of song, dance and sketches to go with William's. Assembled by Christopher Lacombe and Michael McKelvey. Watford, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm and Sat, 5.30pm.

SWINERT *Philo* (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THE TOWER *Alexander Dumas* (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

LONG RUNNERS

At the Barbican *Philo* (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THEATRE GUIDE

Jerome Kingdon's *amusement of theatre* showing in London. House full, returns only. Seats at all prices.

INSPECTOR

Inspector, and *Edward Poul* and *Susan Engel* as the pillars of society. Watford, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

A Little Night Music (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT

The Long and the Short (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

An Inspector Calls (0171-438 8891). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

NEW RELEASES

FATHER OF THE UNDISCOVERED (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

KATIA ISHAKOVA

Katia Ishakova (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

LEAH MERRILL

Leah Merrill (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

WITHINALL

Withinall (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

CURRENT

Current (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

ENTERTAINMENTS

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ART GALLERIES

Art Galleries (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

DANCE

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OPERA & BALLET

Opera & Ballet (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THEATRES

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ADOLEPH

Adoleph (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

SUNSET

Sunset (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

BEST MUSICAL

Best Musical (19). A play about the strains of life in the city. London, Watford Road, WC1 (01923 225 871). Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat, 8.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

ZOR WAMAMAKER

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POP 1

A class act on twin tracks: how Gemini are spreading a little melody in our schools



POP 2

Babylon Zoo follow their astounding single with an equally fine new album

THE TIMES ARTS



POP 3

... while Nick Cave presents a chilling disc of Gothic melodrama on *Murder Ballads*



POP 4

... and Marion, five Mancunians, make a fine album debut with *This World and Body*

Alan Jackson joins chart wannabes Gemini on a groundbreaking gig - at a school in the Midlands

Extra lessons in screaming

It is a cold, wet Wednesday afternoon in Wolverhampton, and lingering in the corridors of Deansfield High is the faint but unmistakable smell of school dinners only recently served. All around us is clean and polished, and the passing teenager flagged down for directions to the Head's office proves to be a model of politeness.

It is not an environment which immediately says to you "showbusiness". Yes, the pupils are in rehearsal for a forthcoming production of *The Mikado*, but this would not be the first place you would think of looking for the next Take That or Boyzone.

Which - today at least - would be a mistake. In the assembly hall it may be true for the weekly PSE (Personal and Social Education) programme, but on offer is not a reprise of the last highlight, a question-and-answer session with the Samaritans. The rows of shuffling, fidgeting girls and determinedly uninterested boys are here to cast their verdict on teen pop's latest wannabes - Gemini, identical twins David and Michael Smallwood, 21, all smouldering looks and razor-sharp cheekbones on the cover of their latest single, *Steal Your Love Away*.

The idea of doing a school tour came to me back in 1991, when I was promoting Take That, says the duo's manager, Carolyn Norman. "It was in the days before they had a record deal, and I was looking for ways of building them a fan base. We'd tried doing a Tiffany/Jamiroq youth sensation of 1990, all but forgotten by 1991, and playing the shopping malls, but it was a bit of an embarrassment for the lads - you could never get the sound right, and people were too busy doing their shopping to take much notice."

A club tour wasn't right either - the punters are there to dance or to meet friends, so aren't interested in paying attention to a bunch of hopefuls. We needed something new and exciting, something that would allow us to hit that sector of the youth market that actually does go out and spend its money on singles - and this was it. Not that we were running the band down children's throats and saying "Get the record, or else..." It was just a matter of taking the opportunity to in-



Gemini rising: David and Michael Smallwood meet and greet their public after an SRO gig at Deansfield High School in Wolverhampton

roduce the boys to a contained audience and saying: "Well, here they are and this is what they do. What do you think?" It all makes good business sense, but where is the educational value in a four-song performance by kudos, pouring Gemini? Hugh Howe, head of Deansfield and its 500 pupils, has a plausible explanation.

"We're trying to raise achievement levels in a school, where many of our youngsters come from backgrounds where unemployment, housing and general lack of facilities are an issue," he says. "But more fundamentally we're about trying to raise aspirations."

"Three girls in Year Ten petitioned to invite them here, and I thought that it would be useful for our 13 and 14-year-olds to have the chance to see two other young people who themselves are aspiring to move forward and make their way in the world. We're not

saying that this is the career path they too should follow. We're just saying look, listen, ask questions and see what you can learn. It's what PSE is all about - broadening pupils' horizons, challenging some of their assumptions about themselves and the world around them. And, of course, there's been a great buzz in school because it involves a pop group."

Back in the assembly hall, it's ready, steady and go for Gemini in their bid to capture the pocket money vote. Against backing tracks cruelly distorted by the predictably dodgy acoustics, they sing their singlet-covered hearts out, all the while twisting and turning their way through the complex dance routines de rigueur at

this end of the pop market. Initially coy, the girls in the audience soon remember how to scream.

"They're sex on legs," is the joint conclusion of Kelly Hopkins and Kathy Jones. "Good singers, great bodies - far better than Take That," chime in Katrina Hyde and Michelle Aris. In the row behind, a male classmate viewing the proceedings from behind Joe 90-style specs opines with all due sagacity: "Very professional presentation, and good songs." Ah! So he'll be buying the Gemini single?

"No."

After a Pannaneseque grilling from the floor ("What's your favourite football team?" "Have you got a girlfriend?" "What's the best way to tell

you apart?") and a lengthy autograph-signing session which finds some newly minted girl fans coming around for a second or even a third time, the twins retire gratefully to an empty classroom. Yes, they acknowledge, for every Wham! there's a score of failures. "So it's a risky business," says Michael. "But even to get to the stage we're at now, first with a publishing deal as songwriters, then with a recording deal as artists, is an achievement."

David adds: "OK, so the percentage of boy groups who actually get deals then go on to make it as big as Take That is small. But never mind. We'll just do our best and be as successful as we can be."

They're such nice, ordinary lads, magnificent at dealing with the kids, is the verdict of Ken Gilkes, the staff member in charge of Deansfield's entertainment programme and hence the man lobbied by the school's three original Gemini

fans, Joanne Till, Clare Wiley and Vicki Summers.

Norman, who has also been involved in the careers of Bad Boys Inc, Let Loose and Right Said Fred, says: "I can't say exactly why I wanted them to be the first band I managed, other than that I got the most horrendous butterflies in my stomach the first time I saw them perform. They're stars even before they've got started. They're nice guys, they're absolutely stunning to look at - and they're talented. Which, at the end of the day, is what counts."

So even though, right now, Gemini are climbing into the back of a van in a wet Wolverhampton school playground, that doesn't mean they're no-hopers. This is what it takes nowadays to break a teen band - and they gave it their all. If anyone deserves Deansfield's spending money, it's these two.

© Steal Your Love Away is available now on EMI

Are you the Marion kind?

What Marion are doing is so unfashionable that one expects to see the Duchess of York wearing it at some charity bash next week. In an in-between time, after the cartoon jolliness of the bright Britpop crowd and before whatever happens next, Marion have wandered off into the high mountains and thundery skies of wild, impassioned pop-rock - the same vein that Radiohead, early U2 and Echo and the Bunnymen mined so

playing so badly. Marion are so in demand that Harding hasn't got a free day until September. "I've booked a dental appointment for the 23rd, to treat myself."

"We want to get another album out this year - we've already written it. I like to keep myself busy, I need order and routine and a work schedule imposed on me; otherwise I just flail around not knowing what to do. I just smoke and watch telly."

Despite his wry sense of humour, Harding is one of our more troubled pop stars. He speaks of not liking himself, of only ever feeling alive when in front of an audience. His Bono-like roar and croon are deeply affecting because singing seems to be the only time



CAITLIN MORAN

he ever feels fully free. "I have horrible nightmares," he says. "My mum and stepdad were woken up by me banging on the front door at three in the morning. I was wearing just pants, a pair of Doc Martens, a rucksack, and burbling on about how a man was going to steam me to death. But I love sleep - it's my favourite thing."

What are the other nine? "Oh, another nine kinds of sleep. You know - on your side, on your front, in a chair, on the floor, in a van... I had my best ever sleep in New York last year. We'd gone to see our American record company; they're in a huge building in the middle of Manhattan. We were on the top floor as the sun was going down, and they put on the finished album. It was the first time we'd heard it since we were in the studio. I was looking at New York's lights and dark patches, listening to the album, being amazed by how good it was, by how vindicated I felt. I slept like a baby that night."

With Harding's phenomenal work rate ensuring there will be a second Marion album before the end of 1996, the band seem almost certain to set up residence in the charts before the summer is fully out.

Jean genie shakes off the jean jinx

NEW ALBUMS: Babylon Zoo are shooting for the moon

BABYLON ZOO
The Boy with the X-Ray Eyes (EMI 7243 8 37204)

THE phenomenal success of Babylon Zoo's first single, *Spaceman*, which registered the biggest one-week sale in this country since Band Aid's *Do They Know I'm Christian?* again in *Is Your Soul for Sale?*, before petering out in a croak of despair. But it chimes perfectly with the new mood of doomed romanticism that seems to be surfacing as the cheery optimism of Britpop begins to fade.

NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS
Murder Ballads (Mute STUMM138)
ORGANISED around a simple theme which gives full rein not only to his morbid obsession with violent death but also to his supreme talent as a narrative songwriter, *Murder Ballads* is vintage Nick Cave. An album rich in Gothic drama and elemental truths, it is by turns graphic ("They found Mary Belovs cuffed to the bed/With a rag in her mouth and a bullet in her head"), sad ("All beauty must die") and comic ("Since I was die") and comic ("Since I was die").

The centrepiece of the album, a 14-minute mass-murder fantasy called *O'Malley's Bar*, is a somewhat laboured exercise, but Cave's raging performance of *Stagger Lee* and his droll excursion into the mind of a 15-year-old female serial killer in *The Curse of Millhaven* rank among the best performances of his ten-album solo career.

Best of all are the duets with P.J. Harvey (a spellbinding *Henry Lee*) and Kylie Minogue on the mournful *Where the Wild Roses Grow*, Cave's biggest ever hit. The finale, a grand singalong version of Bob Dylan's *Death is not the End* featuring the massed voices of Cave, Harvey, Minogue, Shane MacGowan and others, is so macabre it sounds as if the song has not so much been recorded as embalmed.



Missing the boat? Marion have finally released their album but will not play live again until March

who sounds like Bono in a hurry... wasn't that last year's thing? And, having toured themselves into the ground to promote a couple of singles this time last year, why, with the album finally ready, are they nowhere to be seen until the end of March?

Judged purely on its merits *This World and Body* is a decent enough debut, whose high points include a much improved re-recording of their single *Sleep*, the untypically sensitive ballad *Your Body Lies* and the pounding rifferama of *Fallen Through* and *The Only Way*. But although dispatched with tremendous vigour and a lot of heart, the nagging impression remains that they may have missed the boat.

MINISTRY

Fifth Pig (Warner Bros 9362-45838)
NEVER far from self-parody at the best of times, Ministry have drifted into the realms of cliché with their seventh album, *Fifth Pig*. Outflanked in recent years by a wave of industrial acts they influenced in the first place, notably Nine Inch Nails, the duo of Al Jourgensen and Paul Barker have responded by redoubling their efforts to sound as grossly doomy and nihilistic as possible.

The result is a wearying barrage of sub-Black Sabbath guitar riffs, accompanied by Jourgensen bellowing slogans such as "I've never had a life, I don't even know what life is" in his gargling-of-the-gods voice. It does not work at anything less than window-threatening volume, and even then its theatrical effect is strictly one-dimensional. And their version of Bob Dylan's *Lay Lady Lay* is so bad it is not even funny.

DAVID SINCLAIR

RADIOHEAD

For many RADIOHEAD's "The Bends" is the album of the year



"Since March, no record has measured up to the heart-stopping truth and beauty of RADIOHEAD's 'The Bends'. Twelve tracks, 48 minutes, and you're a boggly-eyed loon, clutching people's lapels and screaming 'Did you hear that?' The album by which, in years to come, 1995 will be known". . .

(The Times)

1996 brit award nominees
best band - best album "the bends"



Parlophone

TOP TEN ALBUMS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (What's the Story) Morning Glory? | Oasis (Creation) |
| 2 Jagged Little Pill | Alanis Morissette (Maverick) |
| 3 Different Class | Pulp (Island) |
| 4 Boys for Pele | Tori Amos (East West) |
| 5 Robson & Jerome | Robson & Jerome (RCA) |
| 6 HiStory | Michael Jackson (A&M) |
| 7 Something to Remember | Madonna (Maverick) |
| 8 All Change | Cast (Polygram) |
| 9 CrazySexyCool | TLC (A&M) |
| 10 The Bends | Radiohead (Parlophone) |

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EDUCATION

Why our universities have been driven to revolt

Peter Scott
explains the crisis
behind plans for
a £300 levy on
students

The universities are revolting. Today, the vice-chancellors will decide whether to charge new students an emergency levy of £300, as a preliminary to making all students pay for higher education. Also this week, the Association of University Teachers circulated to its entire membership a warning of gloom and doom and asked for concrete examples of the damage being caused by government cuts.

Their revolt has taken even the universities by surprise. The spark was the autumn Budget. The vice-chancellors, perhaps naively, had hoped for a broadly neutral outcome, even for a modest pre-election boost. In the event, the higher education budget was cut — recurrent funding broadly in line with the Higher Education Funding Council for England's private expectations, and capital expenditure slashed savagely.

The Private Finance Initiative, of course, was invoked as an alternative way to renew universities' and colleges' crumbling plant, but no one was deceived about the initiative's irrelevance in a flat property market. The vice-chancellors were shocked. So, too, was the academic community.

Former polytechnics felt equally betrayed. Buoyed up by their elevation to university status in 1992, just three years later they have been let down with a bump. Two new factors explain the universities' radical disenchantment. First, the limits of efficiency gains are being reached. In the past decade higher education has improved its productivity by more than a quarter. But this cannot continue without a radical change in the nature of higher education. We are trying to provide an elite system at mass-market prices.

Secondly, expansion has ground to a halt. When the Government first announced the new policy of "consolidation" three years ago, it seemed a temporary pause for breath. In the past 12 months it has become clear that growth will not resume before the end of the century. Also, there appears to be an alarming shortfall in student demand, which justifies the Government's policy (although sorting out cause and effect is difficult), but makes things even worse for universities because they risk losing money if they fail to fill their places. The impact of the end-of-growth



The parents of these sixth-formers in Islington, north London, may be among the first to pay a £300 levy

has been profound. In cash terms, universities could live with plunging unit costs, the income they receive per student, so long as their actual budgets grew because more students were being enrolled. Now some find themselves dangerously over-extended, and all have had their room for financial manoeuvre radically curtailed. In psychological terms, growth buoyed the system up. It was tough — higher workloads and more pressure to publish — but it was worth it so long as a new higher education for a new Britain was being built. Now that optimism too has been punctured.

The vice-chancellors' decision to impose a levy — the proposal is likely to be approved if only because there seems to be no

alternative — is a cry of anger and pain. Their message is "enough is enough". Their hope that in a pre-election year the Government, more interested in cash-backs (as to electricity consumers) than new demands on tax-resistant voters, will be alarmed by the prospect of perhaps half a million predominantly middle-class parents receiving an unexpected bill for £300 from October 1997.

Perhaps the threat alone will be sufficient. Certainly if it has to be carried out there will be difficulties. How many universities will reject the levy on principled grounds? How many, faced with a tight recruitment market, will waive it? How many students, or their parents,

will adopt the can't-pay-won't-pay tactic so successfully employed in the poll tax crisis. Will there be legal challenges?

The Government, for reverse (perverser?) reasons, has condemned the proposal. For several years ministers have nodded indulgently at the anguished attempts by some vice-chancellors to persuade their colleagues to agree to charge top-up fees. Now, when it looks as if the vice-chancellors have screwed up their courage to the sticking point, ministers have gone into reverse. Universities and colleges, they now say, have sufficient resources provided they manage them sensibly.

The curious outcome is that most vice-chancellors probably support the levy, although many still have

doubts about charging top-up fees on a permanent basis. With the Government it is the other way round. Ministers are absolutely opposed to the emergency levy, for straightforward electoral reasons, but keen to see the long-term burden for providing higher education transferred from taxpayers to "customers", that is, students and their parents.

Both sides are being unrealistic. The vice-chancellors have a short-term strategy, to keep the political pressure on the Government. But the countervailing pressures on ministers, to deliver tax cuts while not harming too publicly frontline services in schools, housing or social services, are much more powerful.

The vice-chancellors still lack a genuine long-term strategy. Ostensibly it is to campaign for the introduction of income-contingent loans to cover tuition as well as student maintenance. Under this scheme the Government puts more money for higher education up front and students pay it back sometime or never. The scheme does not appeal to the Treasury. Those vice-chancellors who are committed to the principle of public funding of higher education know this, which is why they are prepared to go along with income-contingent loans. They know they are never going to happen.

Our present unsatisfactory and inequitable student loans system and year-on-year efficiency gains are holding down costs nicely. The only kind of "alternative" funding that ministers will accept is a system that produces immediate and substantial savings — which is the last thing vice-chancellors want. Their greatest fear is a scenario in which the success of top-up fees enables the Government to cut its contribution. An unbridgeable gap: vice-chancellors see alternative funding as supplementary to existing grants; ministers as substituting for public expenditure.

But the Government is being equally naive and shortsighted. Universities with disaffected leaders, stressed staff, ageing equipment and crumbling buildings overflying with students, cannot play their part in building a new Britain. The "other government" led by Michael Heseltine, with its mantras about competitiveness and technology foresight, affects to believe that universities are key institutions in enhancing our national wellbeing. If this is more than rhetoric it must mean that somewhere in the depths of Whitehall the case for investing in higher education is acknowledged. The vice-chancellors' task is to unlock this secret support.

● The author is director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Education at the University of Leeds.



The elite of Oxford — but do they put off many pupils?

Oxbridge doors 'should be opened wider'

Our ancient centres of learning are not doing enough to admit state school pupils

The recent debate on elitism in state-financed education has centred on the grammar schools, but I also have concerns about Oxford and Cambridge.

As a Cambridge graduate I am convinced that outstanding centres of tertiary education, by no means only Oxford and Cambridge, are essential in this very competitive world. But if they receive public money, they should be equally accessible to pupils of exceptional talent regardless of background.

Oxford and Cambridge take a disproportionately large number of candidates from the independent sector. Why? There are many issues and many colleges are determinedly seeking to redress the balance.

Selection is essentially imperfect, and this had led us at the Henrietta Barnett School to examine carefully both our entrance examination and interview procedure. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-faith community and one third of our pupils are bilingual. No faith or ethnic group dominates. We constantly question how we can give equal opportunities to our candidates and how we can identify real potential, rather than achievement gained through a multifaceted coaching regime.

The intentions of Oxford and Cambridge to widen their intake are clear, as such schemes as the "Target Schools" demonstrate. But these intentions are not always confirmed by candidates' experiences at interview. Last year I wrote an open letter to all colleges to which our girls had applied. I had helpful feedback from many colleges and yet I continue to hear disturbing reports from my pupils.

The interview kept interrupting the interview to arrange some Christmas event.

"He was reading *The Guardian* when I arrived and had not read my application form."

The two interviewers were more interested in scoring academic points off each other and gave me little opportunity to speak for myself.

A girl who had had a debilitating and depressing illness was asked whether she thought she would take to drink and drugs at university.

A Muslim girl in a headscarf was asked where she came from and what her parents (shopkeepers) did for a living.

I know that the comments above are only the perceptions of the candidates, but for the often less confident state school pupil the experience can be destructive. It should be possible to interview in such a way that a candidate feels that she has had the opportunity to be assessed fairly, and rejection is not then to be regarded as negative. Letters sent to me by colleges with individual comments are very much appreciated.

My current A-level pupils achieved outstanding GCSE results, attracting much national publicity. Some of our most able would not consider Oxford and Cambridge and some of those returning from interviews have confirmed the prejudices of my students. The college that sent a friendly welcoming letter to a student going for interview, setting out clearly what was expected as regards dress, topics likely to be covered and the procedure to be followed, is still an exception.

All colleges should take seriously the disproportionate intake of state school pupils and consider the image they are giving. An interview is a two-way process. Stories such as those above circulate in schools and do much harm.

It was suggested to me by an admissions tutor that many Cambridge colleges are not places for a quiet or self-effacing pupil, however bright. The interview techniques described above confirm this, and Cambridge is the loser.

JANE DE SWIET

● The author is head teacher of the Henrietta Barnett School, a selective girls' school in north London.

Learning the tricks of the exam trade

How to make the most of an Easter tutorial college

Students hoping for Easter miracles from a tutorial college revision programme are being advised to be more realistic about their aims.

Two years of study will not be magically delivered in a week-long course, but the techniques taught can make grades of difference to the A-level candidate. One of the key benefits of a revision course is the way it can help to refine study skills and ensure that the work already done by sixth-formers is put to optimum use.

Elizabeth Rickards, co-principal at Davies, Laing & Dick, one of the leading tutorial colleges, says: "The most common reason in our experience why students underachieve in exams is because they do not know what the examiner wants. They have no experience of seeing what an A-grade answer looks like, and even if they do know, they just have not practised enough the theory of good exam performance."

"Easter revision courses focus on teaching students how to revise effectively. Many young people disappear off to their rooms as the exams draw near, but are they actually working up there? Are they covering all the material? Are they revising topics they like and are good at, but ignoring those topics which actually need more attention?"

She says that students of A-level mathematics were notorious at sticking to "soft"

topics to revise if left to their own devices.

"Easter revision courses teach you to treat the whole business of exams in an efficient and professional manner. You learn to stop feeling overwhelmed by the whole exam ordeal and you become motivated to get down to work."

The fact that parents are digging deep to aid the candidate's chances must be an incentive. A week's course costs £300 to £400 on average, but demystifying the A-

The techniques taught can make grades of difference to A-level pupils

level process is part of a good revision college's role. Ms Rickards feels that "the first and most important aspect of motivating students is to make them realise that they can be successful. You do not have to be Einstein to get good grades at A-level but you do have to be thorough and organised, and you need to know what the examiner is looking for."

Finding a course to suit your needs is becoming ever more difficult, however, with a growth in "seasonal" colleges which emerge only at Easter. They are not neces-

sarily to be avoided because the more reputable use experienced classroom teachers available only during the Easter break.

But the 32-college Conference for Independent Further Education (CIFE) counsels caution. Myles Glover, the organisation's secretary, says: "On the whole the mushrooming of the seasonal providers is not good news for the public. All of our colleges are established and run courses the whole year and they have a core of permanent full-time staff, giving stability. The danger of seasonal providers is that they simply come into the market and are effectively brokers between freelance tutors and parents."

The independent consultancy, Gabbitas, also advises parents to do their own homework on colleges before parting with the average £350 for a week's revision.

Wendy Johnson of Gabbitas says: "Our advisers have noticed an increase in the numbers setting up just for Easter. Parents ought to find out what system there is of comeback or guarantee of standards." She advises parents to ask for details of past parents and students the organisation has taught, so that they can be quizzed about its service.

DAVID CHARTER

● To check whether a college is a member of CIFE, contact it on 01233 824997.

Are we getting value for our money from Ofsted?

On Monday, Chris Woodhead, the Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, will pronounce on the performance of state education over the past year. But what sort of value did the taxpayer get for the £67 million spent by Ofsted, the agency he heads?

The inspection system has been scrutinised in a report for CIBT Education Services, Ofsted's largest contractor. This is not, perhaps, the most impartial source, since CIBT presumably wants to remain in business, but the judgments are creditably objective. A key proposal, to move to a ten-year inspection cycle, for example, is certainly not in the organisation's interests.

The author of the study is Mike Douse, who ran Australia's Disadvantaged Schools Programme in the 1970s and now advises governments all over the world. Not previously acquainted with the Ofsted system, his verdict in the agency's jargon might be "sound but with important weaknesses".

Some of the report's criticisms are mildly coded, as Ofsted's often are. But most do not take much reading between the lines. A call for the agency to be "ideologically objective and also manifestly appearing so", for example, will be seen as a barely disguised reference to Mr Woodhead's more controversial outpourings.

However, the main criticisms, which would find an echo in schools up and down the country, are that the process is too negative and mechanistic. The framework under which inspectors operate is to alter in April, addressing some of Mr Douse's concerns, but the present reliance on checklists and pseudo-scientific analysis is a common source of disquiet.

Ofsted's approach is both

Time to inspect the inspector

some guarantee of consistency among the disparate teams and a defence against charges of unfairness, but it is also a straitjacket preventing inspectors from making constructive comments. The report urges that, as inspection gains acceptance, qualitative impressions should be encouraged. "By such means, inspection should come to encourage high-quality



Chris Woodhead: outspoken

ty diversity rather than to reward mere conformity." Mr Douse concludes that Ofsted has justified its existence, but the process should move from a "penal cum archival" approach to one that focuses more on helping schools to improve. He believes that too much emphasis is placed on identifying failure and not enough on steering teachers towards effective practice elsewhere.

The sentiments are echoed

in a second report on inspection published this week by the National Union of Teachers. Professor John MacBeath, of Strathclyde University, argues that the Scottish system, with its emphasis on self-evaluation, produces a more frank and accurate assessment of schools' real strengths and weaknesses.

Both reports want schools to be judged against national standards, but express doubts about the way they are measured at present. Mr Douse says that some Ofsted statistics are "dangerously misleading" and suggests using socio-economic indicators as well as examination results to set targets for improvement, which would trigger a full inspection if they were not met.

He also finds that while Ofsted reports may be meaningful to the professionals, the same cannot be said of parents, who are marginalised under the current arrangements. The report says that the summary reports provided to parents achieve little, and many head teachers "massage the inspectors' messages through highly selective media releases and letters to parents".

However, Mr Douse is generally impressed by the integrity of all sides concerned with inspection. "Many of them are sceptical — even cynical — regarding the process; and frequently they mistrust one another. But there is a general sense of just about everyone attempting to make the existing arrangements operate as well as possible, while still reserving the right to comment and the ability to dream. Whatever else it may have done, Ofsted has certainly helped to stimulate a widespread, fascinating and, in my view, potentially valuable national educational debate."

JOHN O'LEARY



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Young disciples would cherish a game fit for heroes

Walk along a piece of common land in Wales in summer and there you will find small boys playing cricket. Listen and you will hear that they imagine themselves as England, even in these difficult cricketing times, playing a Test against Australia or West Indies. Playing for higher international stakes, they might for the moment ignore Glamorgan. Atherton's name will be on every schoolboy's lips as each, in his mind's eye, thinks himself to be the England captain at the crease.

Across in the playground of the school, a football game may be in progress. Of the spontaneous type where pull-overs form the goalposts and no adult dares interfere. Listen closely to their shouts and the running commentary and Manchester United will be playing Liverpool or Chelsea. There will be no sign of Cardiff or Wrexham. The clamour will be to be Giggs, Rush and Hughes just as much as for Cantona and Schuster. Premiership, top of the league stuff, is what matters. Hero worship is a fine thing.

A child's mind a kingdom is. Willy-nilly he will happily cross boundaries without fear, but not always. Not in rugby.

Behind the goalposts in Bala or Llangennech, schoolboys will strike eternal attitudes. Wales will forever be playing England and, unlike the other sports, there will be no others this time for England. Rugby is Wales.

Wales may languish, as some say, in the third division of world rugby, whereas England are at the top of the first along with South Africa, New Zealand and France. However, the Wales jersey may have become of late, the boys in the village game will always aspire to wear it and conspire in the park that Wales always win. For these youngsters' heroes are born still to play rugby in Wales.

A Welshman will freely

FIVE NATIONS



CHAMPIONSHIP

As Wales prepare for Twickenham, Gerald Davies says beating England is still important

admit, as Arwel Thomas did last weekend, that, for him, England are the team to beat. England may not care to admit as much, but more recent, reserved or wishing to effect a cool disinterest in these matters, but, come the moment when the whistle blows, they will feel the same, too, down at the clubhouses of Saracens and Wasps.

Thomas plays against England for the first time tomorrow, but he will, in his mind's eye, have done so innumerable times before on Trebanos's spare patch. He will have imagined great games of ebb and flow, of attack and counter-attack, of thrust and parry and the match will have been won and lost, amid a crescendo of excitement, in the dying minutes with a kick or great try.

The truth, sadly, falls far short of this, for the matches have hardly been ones to inspire. Games between the countries lead to tension and inevitably demand much of a man's nerves; but they are of the teeth-gritting, jaw-jutting kind. There is, finally, no prodigious skill as events unfold, only a stomach for endurance and defiance. Of all the

five nations' championship games, it is the one with the awkward habit of letting us down the most.

If there are moments of enlightenment, they are few. Underwood's 80-yard sprint or Carling's try in 1990; Evans's match-winning in 1993 or Hadley's score after Clement's counter-attack in 1988. We may choose to remember Rob Andrew's immaculate goal-kicking in 1986 or Robert Jones's tactical kicks in 1989. Regrettably, there are matches that are unmemorable for the bland quality of rugby.

Often, the fixture is remembered for the wrong reasons. There is the enduring image of Geoff Wheel and Bill Beaumont in a confrontational stare and snarl in 1980, when Paul Ringer became only the second player ever to have been sent off in an international at Twickenham. We may forget Dusty Hare's calm precision in delivering the final penalty goal that led England to that year's grand slam.

That the fixture has the capacity to diminish players was manifest in the bitterness that overflowed into violence at the Arms Park in 1987. Players carry the baggage of the past and cannot cope with it; as, indeed, does the spectator, who is too loud in his grievances or exaggerated celebrations.

It remains a great fixture, but one that, by now, deserves a better outcome. Of late, Wales have been out of sorts, too frayed at the edges to make this come about. England have had too much of their own way to make the game a proper contest. If the Welsh was of the Seventies queried whether it was worth continuing the fixture, so can England question that now. The ball is in Wales's court.

More than that, it is high time that we had a game of greatness — and for new heroes to be born — especially in Wales. There is much need of them.



Jones, one of a young breed of Wales players who display the eagerness to conjure up the stuff of Welsh legend. Photograph: Huw Evans

Doctor's son displays supportive touch

By DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

THERE they have set this season in their pristine Wales blazers, the international class of 1996, fresh morning faces shining with pride and hope. Features are neutralised by the close-cropped hair styles favoured by the young, but there is no mistaking Arwel Thomas — he is so slim and small that he can only be the stand-off half.

The bigger one who looks as though he might be the new back-row forward turns out to be Leigh Davies, the Neath centre, at 19 the youngest of the breed who have sprung to prominence for Wales, virtually unknown beyond their own border. So heavy is the investment in youth that ten of the side that meet England tomorrow will be playing their first international at Twickenham.

This is a generation that grew up knowing Wales in the 1980s and 1990s struggling, despite the 1994 championship title, to swim with the tide. Davies was two when a grand slam was last won and only 12 when there was the by-now rare pleasure of a triple crown, in 1988. Not for them memories of the dashing Gareth Edwards, the darling Phil Bennett — they can create their own legends.

Among the new boys is Rhodri Gwyn Jones. The open-side flanker is the key to the way in which Wales will approach the championship. When Kevin Bowring announced his XV to play Italy last month, he described his style as based on an open-side who could support his back line and ensure continuity. Ensure, too, that Wales do not get dragged into a dogfight that they cannot win against bigger, heavier forwards.

Jones, now 23, says that he became a flanker by accident. Trailing after Rhys, his older brother, to the village club at Loughor, between Swansea and Llanelli, he wanted to

join in; at the age of eight, he knew none of the backs so joined his brother in the forwards and was so small that he was relegated to the flank.

It was, though, in the blood: his father, uncle, great uncles were all back-row forwards. "He has a very good pedigree," Gareth Jenkins, now his coach at Llanelli and

Welsh on their guard — 40

formerly assistant to the national team, said. Educated at Llandovery College, one of the great Welsh rugby nurseries, Jones captained the Wales under-15 team, then played in the under-18, under-19 and under-21 teams.

An A cap followed against Canada, but in 1994, a string of injuries retarded his progress; at much the same time, however, Llanelli lost a host of high quality back-row

forwards and Jones stepped into one of the gaps that Lyn Jones's departure created.

"I'm not blisteringly quick, but it has more to do with anticipation than actual speed," Jones said. "If your angles are good and there's good communication with the backs, you can get there a bit before the opposition."

Jones, whose father is a doctor, is a fourth-year student at the University of Wales College of Medicine. Examinations limited his rugby before Christmas and he was surprised to be called into an extended national squad.

"It will be difficult to combine medicine with rugby, but I have to get my degree," Jones said. "Anything can happen with injuries and rugby only lasts into the 30s."

At 6ft, he is one of the Josh Kronfield school of flankers, a specialist, ball-handling, support player. "His progress depended upon whether he could develop more power and strength in his game,"

Jenkins said. "He worked at weights to push himself towards 15st and, at the start of this season, I recognised that, if Llanelli were going to be successful, we had to play a game around our No 7."

"What players like Lyn and Gwyn have is uncoachable. It's instinctive. Rugby is more than a game where you hit people over, get up and do it again. Many people play with heart and soul and passion, but when you have an important function in the side, you also have the responsibility of understanding it. Gwyn has that and it makes him captaincy material."

For the moment, Twickenham and a second cap loom. "England will attack close to Arwel [Thomas] and me, and we will have to contain them," Jones said. "That will be the crux of the match, if we can stop their back row." If they do, and if the Wales backs can catch fire, then maybe the stuff of Welsh legend will not seem so far distant after all.

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Late decision on Monsieur Le Cure's running plans

Edwards delays Irish venture

By JULIAN MUSCAT

MONSIEUR LE CURE'S participation in the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Leopardstown on Sunday is going to the wire, despite the bleak prospect of racing at Sandown tomorrow, when the horse is also engaged.

John Edwards, who trains Monsieur Le Cure, is keen to take advantage of milder conditions in Ireland. But Hector Brown, who owns the ten-year-old chaser, has yet to sanction the plan. "He wants to leave it to the last minute," Edwards said yesterday.

The Leopardstown race represents one of the last opportunities for Cheltenham Gold



Monsieur Le Cure looks across the water, although Edwards has yet to confirm whether he will run at Leopardstown

Nap: SEA GOD (4.30 Southwell)
Next best: Neg Vintage (3.00 Southwell)

Cup aspirants to compete outside handicap company. Master Oats and Jodani, the latter looking to win the prize for the fourth year running, are to represent Britain but the most interesting horse in the race is Imperial Call.

Trained in Co Cork by Fergus Sutherland, Imperial Call tackles three miles for the first time after featuring prominently over shorter trips in top-class company. All week, the seven-year-old has been backed with Ladbrokes to make his mark.

Imperial Call's last outing saw him take the scalp of Strong Platinum, second favourite for the Queen Mother Champion Chase, over 2 1/2 miles at Leopardstown three weeks ago. Doubtless Imperial Call was helped by a 12lb weight advantage that day, but his pedigree suggests he

will improve for covering a distance of ground.

He should, theoretically, stay three miles with ease, although these are anxious times for Sutherland's stable. Imperial Call is one of half a dozen horses owned by Liselan Farms Ltd, the offshoot of a marketing company which recently advertised all its horses for sale. Already, there has been considerable interest, but victory on Sunday would surely trigger a race for the cheque-books among wealthy British patrons.

Richard Dunwoody, who

spurred the ride aboard Imperial Call, schooled his preferred mount, Flashing Steel, over five fences after racing at Punchestown yesterday. But Dunwoody was out of luck from his five mounts. Blazing Spectacle, a candidate for the Arkle Trophy Chase, was an odds-on favourite on unsuitable ground. And Balawbar, one of four horses in contention at the final flight of the Red Bog Hurdle, could not contain Derrymoye, the mount of Mark Dwyer.

Corall's cut Derrymoye's Champion Hurdle odds to 20-1

from 33-1 but the seven-year-old will first tackle the Boyne Hurdle, at Navan a week tomorrow, before connections finalise their Cheltenham agenda. Derrymoye has the Stayers' Hurdle as an alternative. Trianon Square, a fine third behind Derrymoye after a two-year absence, was trimmed to 25-1 from 50-1 for the Champion Hurdle but is almost certain to contest the longer event.

Tim Easterby, who assumed command when his father, Peter, retired from training on Wednesday, wast-

ed no time in opening his account when Bridle Path won the Pender's Novices' Hurdle at Sedgefield yesterday.

Adrian Maguire's efforts to resume at the weekend were all but realised when he suffered no reaction to riding work at David Nicholson's stables yesterday morning. "I feel 100 per cent and all that is left for me to pass the racecourse doctor," Maguire said of his scheduled visit to Sandown tomorrow. "I have four decent mounts lined up and I hope the meeting goes ahead." Don't we all.

Cold snap continues to bite

PROSPECTS for tomorrow's National Hunt meetings deteriorated yesterday, with frost threatening the valuable cards at Sandown, Cheltenham and Agia Hurdle.

"We had a very heavy frost overnight," Andrew Cooper, the clerk of the course at Sandown, said. "We will cover up again but you can't cover the whole course. It is almost inevitable that we will be having an inspection early on Saturday morning."

Tomorrow's meeting carries £140,000 in added prize-money, and features Cheltenham trials such as the grade one Scilly Isles Novices' Chase and Agia Hurdle.

Prospects are poor at Cheltenham, where the feature event is the £25,000-added Coral Grand National Trial. Roger Farrant, the clerk of the course, said: "We couldn't have raced today. Twenty per cent of the course is still frozen."

Hopes are higher at Wetherby, in spite of an inspection at 9.15am today. A course spokeswoman said: "We had a very slight frost overnight and there is still a bit of snow on the track. The inspection is mainly precautionary."

Today's scheduled fixture at Kelso was called off yesterday because of frost and snow, while the meeting at Folkestone is subject to a 7am inspection.

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TOTE JACKPOT MEETING

2.00 HANHAM HANDICAP

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2.30 LINGFORD APPRENTICES CLAIMING

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3.30 OLD CLIPSTONE MEDIAN AUCTION STAKES

Asprilla's transfer blocked by insurance

By DAVID MADDOCK

NEWCASTLE United's intended £7.6 million purchase of Faustino Asprilla, the Colombia international, has reached an impasse because of complications with insurance. The player's proposed transfer from Parma has been delayed for nearly a week, with little prospect of an immediate solution.

The reason, it transpires, is that Newcastle have been unable to secure adequate insurance cover for a player who will command such a significant fee. Scans taken of Asprilla's knee at the medical that he underwent last Friday revealed a congenital problem that could lead to an arthritic condition.

The problem is unlikely to affect the forward's performance in the foreseeable future and Newcastle are still keen to complete the deal. The club's insurance company, however, is unwilling to provide cover for a player rated

broke their silence yesterday when Sir John Hall, the club chairman, confirmed that, while the situation had reached an impasse, they were still hopeful of completing the transfer.

"The board are handling negotiations as they always do when they get to this stage," he said. "There are still a number of matters to be resolved to our satisfaction. We are running a business and we must be left to get on with it."

Sir John dismissed as "absolute rubbish" suggestions that the medical examination uncovered separate problems relating to Asprilla's private life. The player's advisors are looking into such accusations to see if they are actionable.

The player's advisors are clearly worried that the insurance question may eventually scupper the deal. Parma officials were reported to be on their way to Newcastle last night, with evidence that they suggest will prove that the knee problem will have no bearing on the forward's career. "He could play for 15 years without being affected," the spokesman said.

Eric Cantona returns to Selhurst Park tomorrow for his first visit since the infamous night a year ago, when he ventured into the Crystal Palace crowd and kicked a supporter. Police have contingency plans to deal with any Palace supporters attempting to attend Manchester United's fixture with Wimbledon on Saturday.

Peter Schmeichel, the United goalkeeper, believes that such measures should not be necessary. "He attempted to appease any rogue supporters by pleading with them to understand the Frenchman. 'People have only one picture of Eric — it is that he is a bully,' he said. 'They say he is good at football, but he is a hooligan.'"

"It is completely untrue. He is a gentleman. I see a very different person from the picture that has been painted. I know him. I train with him and he doesn't deserve the image. I'm not saying that I would have gone into the crowd, but I fully understand why he did it. The pressure on him is enormous."

□ Birmingham City will today aim to persuade an FA commission of inquiry not to close their St Andrew's ground when they answer charges of misconduct over crowd trouble there when they played Millwall on November 4. If found guilty, Birmingham face a heavy fine and the threat of ground closure.



Asprilla: knee condition

among the most expensive in the world when he is suffering a condition that has implications for his playing future.

It leaves the FA Carling Premiership leaders with a dilemma that they are unable to solve at present. They have given their word to complete the deal, but are unable to do so because they cannot take the gamble of paying such a huge fee for a player without the safety net of insurance. Efforts continue to thrash out a compromise with the insurers and Parma.

Sources in Parma confirmed last night that the insurance issue had become a sticking block. "We understand that Newcastle are attempting to find a way of negotiating a solution to the problem and we are hopeful the deal will still go ahead," the club's media spokesman said.

Newcastle had imposed a news blackout on the deal over the past seven days, but they

Tunisia revel in the sound of silence



Two young spectators leave no doubt as to where their loyalties lie as South Africa, Bafana Bafana, take on Ghana. Photograph: Juda Ngwenya

In South Africa, soccer is a black game. The receptionist in the hotel where I am staying said: "I am keen on soccer; it is the same as hockey, so I understand it." Around her, the others shook their heads and said: "It's not like rugby or cricket."

That was earlier in the week. What makes the African Nations Cup final tomorrow required viewing (and has sold out the 80,000 capacity Johannesburg Soccer City Stadium) is that the national team, known as Bafana Bafana (the boys), has made it to the last shoot-out won their group, beat Algeria in the quarter-final, demolished the Black Stars of Ghana in the semi and have only Tunisia between them and glory.

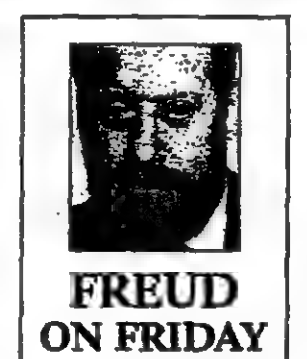
Tunisia do not even have a nickname. Tunisia are only 31st in the world rankings. Tunisia have a Polish manager. The average age of Tunisia's team is 22. Were a Tunisian club coach shipping in supporters for the final, it would have to leave ten days ago... so they are lonely and unloved, and also considered plum luck to have beaten Gabon on penalties to enter the last four.

On Wednesday afternoon,

they were due to exit this competition courtesy of mighty Zambia at the Kingsmead rugby stadium in Durban, and as forecasts about attendance were pessimistic — less of a follow-the-crowd than a what-time-can-you-get-along occasion — I went.

My driver dropped me where the police had erected a road block a quarter of a mile from the stadium, and I shuffled past the car parks towards the entrance. There were two stalls selling fast food, one man and his daughter offering African caps and African flags. Nobody selling programmes: there were no programmes. In the shortlist for the turnstiles, a man wearing a jacket marked "Spectator Assistance" gave me a cursory body check and told the man behind me that he could not bring in his can of Coca-Cola — bottles would be all right.

Admission was 20 or 35 Rand (you get about six to the pound) and I opted for the higher price; inside the huge stadium, nobody examined the small print on the ticket and, as the new North Stand was bathed in 90-degree sunshine and deserted, I took my seat in the less than half-full



FREUD ON FRIDAY

South Stand. When the teams came out, my neighbours and all their neighbours gave Zambia the big hello, so I asked about the connection between the people of Durban and what had been Northern Rhodesia.

"We are all Africans, not Arabs; anyway, they useless, they not here for long."

There was a lot of smiling and waving of the new African flag. I had bought one: I waved it.

Zambia were the classy footballers; hot favourites. They knew that they would win; wanted to show their Afro-supporters how it is done. Tunisia had a solid defence and played honest football. On the halfway line, there was a treble table with a

starched white cloth. Three men in suits sat behind it like officials at a Haitian cocktail, or nodes sitting out a *déjeuner sur l'herbe*.

We were 14 minutes into the game when Tunisia scored a soft goal, more of a cross that snuck behind the keeper, and as this was just what those who had come did not want to see, the event was met with silence. The silence intensified when Tunisia scored again after a pathetic defensive mix-up and now the crowd was whistling, which is like Brits booing: the noise similar to that at the cage birds show at Blackpool which used to precede the Liberal Party assembly.

Half-time: as in the intervals at the old Windmill Theatre, people vaulted over seats, though here it was not to get closer to the stage. They went to the bars to return with cans of drink and the couple in front of me with a polystyrene box containing a polystyrene bum filled with a pink plastic cushion.

Second-half Tunisia scored again. The whistling got worse. The Tunisian goalkeeper, who is also their captain, had an argument

with the referee about a Zambia trainer who had gone onto the field. Elsewhere, players were falling over and staying in situ until they were stretched off... to bounce up and rejoin the game.

Zambia pulled one back, shooting at the keeper who stopped it with his chin, saw the rebound slammed into the net and lay on the ground for some time.

Now, the game came to life, speeded up: every Zambia attack cheered by the crowd. For 1-3 was a deficit that could be made up.

Tunisia defended, all 11 men in their own half, and still looked dangerous on the breaks. At the end of this golden period, they were awarded a penalty, and scored.

To trail 4-1 with not long to go is beyond redemption and, by the time of the final whistle, just after a 93rd-minute goal from the Africans, not too many of us were left in the ground.

As latecomers had parked their cars across the entrance to the car parks, there were an awful lot of people outside, sort of angry and sad but looking forward to their real heroes making it all better tomorrow afternoon.

Financial support for Super League improved

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

ALTHOUGH it pales in comparison to the £87 million being spent over five years on the Super League, a £1.7 million sponsorship of the new summer rugby league competition, announced yesterday, is not an insignificant sum on the part of Stones, its provider.

Rather than going direct to the clubs, who are receiving the entire budget of the Super League agreement with The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*, the new three-year deal will cover operational costs incurred by the Rugby Football League (RFL). An additional £300,000 will go on a promotional campaign.

The source of prize-money for the inaugural Super League season, which starts at the end of next month, has still to be worked out. Another unresolved detail is support sponsors for the first and second divisions, as the Stones brand name of Bass brewers, which has covered the divisions for a decade, will be on the Super League alone.

Maurice Lindsay, the RFL chief executive, said that there was considerable interest from at least one potential backer. "This was triggered by Super League, but there is an opportunity for companies to look at the whole of our game," he said. "There are other competitions, such as the world club championship."

The climax to the domestic season, to be contested by the leading four sides in the 12-team Super League, will be the Stones Cup, a name change from the end-of-season Premiership, which will culminate in a final at Old Trafford on September 8, in the week before the world club championship starts. The latter competition will involve the four leading European and Australian teams.

Lindsay said: "The advent of the Stones Super League brings about a bright new future. We now have a magnificent chance to put the game where it belongs — on a world stage."

Brisbane Broncos' ANZ Stadium has emerged as the likely venue for the club championship final on September 28. There are plans to take the event to Hong Kong, Tokyo and San Francisco. Lindsay also predicts expansion, with participants from Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa and sides from New Zealand other than Auckland Warriors, the country's solitary Super League side.

Meanwhile, Bradford Bulls are close to agreeing terms with James Lowe, the Leeds hooker, one of the team's most consistent performers, even though he has been offered a new three-year deal.

SPORTS LETTERS

Educational changes have undermined English cricket

From Mr Bryan Burdett

Sir, I regret Mr Subba Row (*Sports Letters*, January 27) can only look forward to a further decline in English cricket in the coming decades. Structural changes in the hierarchy cannot undo the damage done in the Sixties when the new comprehensive education coincided with a change in teachers' attitudes towards non-academic pursuits and their own working hours.

Almost overnight, state schools ceased offering cricket coaching and many other after-hours facilities and the development of potentially fine cricketers was limited to the independent schools and the few remaining grammar schools. Within a few years, it was obvious what was going to happen, and my cricket

club, along with many others, made a major effort to replace the lost schools' coaching and facilities — and still does. But the increasing academic burden on the children, problems of transporting them to and from the cricket club and the shifting priorities of the adults involved have ensured that their efforts could never be enough and the flow of fine cricketers has dwindled to a fraction of what it was.

The counties began papering over the cracks by importing overseas players and the shift to limited-overs cricket has further constrained the development of Test-match skills. Socialist education policy may largely eliminate schools cricket coaching in the next decade, and our national game will be consigned to

being part of our history but no longer part of our culture. Yours faithfully, BRYAN BURDETT, York House, 39 The Avenue, Fareham, Hampshire.

From Mr John W. Devall Sir, There is another principal reason for the poor performance of England's international cricketers: the climate.

English conditions are highly conducive to soft pitches which usually assist bowlers far more than batsmen. This results in county bowlers getting their wickets too easily, ie, without being forced to learn to control line and length consistently and having to think deeply about how to remove a good batsman.

Thus, when bowlers who appear to be good in English county conditions go abroad on international duty (or face good batsmen on true pitches in a good English summer) they find themselves outclassed by the West Indians, Australians, Pakistanis, Indians and others who have learnt their trade on hard pitches; for example, their slow bowlers really can spin the ball besides controlling line and length.

English batsmen often have to bat under conditions where the pitch is as much as the bowler is responsible for the ball behaving unpredictably and where trying to play good shots is difficult except on fast, true pitches like those at the Oval. Our batsmen thus have less opportunity to bat and to learn to play against the highest quality bowlers on good pitches, which means they find shot-making and run-scoring too difficult against international opposition.

The solution is, in part to encourage groundsmen to try to produce good, hard batting pitches and to encourage many more of our better county players to go overseas in the winter to gain experience just as the best overseas players have come here to learn how to combat our conditions (and our bowlers).

Additionally, if the bowlers become so much better, the batsmen would automatically have to improve in order to excel even in county conditions on good pitches. Yours faithfully, J.W. DEVALL, 36 Woolston Drive, Hough, Cheshire.

From Mr Philip Nind Sir, To carry Kanan Subba Row's thesis a step further, there are two dominating factors affecting the future of English cricket:

1. The fact that, sadly, money dominates any future direction and planning. 2. The need to overcome the inordinately parochial attitude of the majority of the games' organisers and administrators.

Only revolution rather than evolution will bring about a structure likely in the immediate future to raise standards of recruitment and training. To put in place the organisation implied by Mr Subba Row will need massive funds, far larger than a single sponsor can be expected to provide. Yours sincerely, PHILIP NIND, 10 Albany Park, Albany, Guildford, Surrey.

Sports Letters may be sent by fax to 0177-782 5211. They must include a daytime telephone number.

Restoring spirit of rugby

From Mr N. P. Bradshaw

Sir, A recurrent problem in modern rugby union is the tendency of the defending side to concede a penalty whenever a try is threatened. This practice leads to a scrappy game and one in which kicked penalties predominate over tries.

Attempts to correct the balance of the game by altering the scoring have not been particularly successful, so I suggest another approach. The only benefit a side obtains when conceding a penalty is that of ending the opposition's attack. It is this which makes such tactics frustrating for players and spectators alike.

My suggestion is that if a penalty is kicked at goal the restart should not take the form of a kick-off, but rather a scrum to the kicking team at the place from which the

penalty was taken. There would be many benefits from such a rule change.

First, defending teams would become much less likely to deliberately concede kickable penalties since the risk of conceding points would not be offset by territorial gain. Second, it would be possible to reduce the points value of a penalty kick since the kicking side is guaranteed possession and position after the kick. This would make the result of the match less dominated by penalty kicking.

The final benefit would be to restore some of the spirit of rugby by making try-scoring and solid, legitimate defence the most profitable as well as the most exciting part of the game.

Yours faithfully, N. BRADSHAW, 80 Elgin Avenue, Maids Vale, W9.

Thing of the past

From Mr M. D. Varcoe-Cocks

Sir, The return of Monica Seles is to be welcomed: her presence is vital to raise the low interest in and standard of women's tennis.

So far as her mental state is concerned, I wonder how much quicker she might have been able to recover and return to the game and normal life if she had not had so many sessions with a sports therapist/counsellor.

It is hard not to conclude that such extended counselling — which appears to be continuing — has helped to keep the trauma foremost in Seles's mind, as her distress at

her post-match press conference in Melbourne showed (report, January 29). Most people who have been mugged manage to go out again: nearly everyone who falls off a bicycle gets back on.

I do not believe that Seles has a chance of coming to terms with the attack on her so long as she herself, her friends, family and advisers (and the "unholy trinity" of referees) refuse to treat the incident as something in the past, awful at the time and in its immediate aftermath, but clearly — nearly three years on — a thing of the past.

Yours faithfully, M. D. VARCOE-COCKS, 5 Brackenbury Road, W6.

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Britain find strength in memory of McGibbon



"We found a water bottle in the van the other day," Clary Bailey, one of the team coaches, said. "It turned out to be Kim's, but at least they were talking about it. They've

WINNING CHESS MOVE

B mate.

6

*TIMES MAY VARY

1, ... Rcl+: 2, Kh2 Rrg2+: 3, Rrg2 Nf3 mate

FREQUENCY GUIDE: RADIO 1. FM 97.6-89.8. **RADIO 2:** FM 88.5-80.2. **RADIO 3:** FM 90.2-82.4. **RADIO 4:** FM 92.4-94.6; LW 198; MW 720. **RADIO 5:** LIVE MW 693, 908. **WORLD SERVICE:** MW 648; LW 1128 (12.45-5.55am). **CLASSIC FM:** FM 100-102. **VIRGIN RADIO:** FM 105.6; MW 1197, 1215. **TALK RADIO UK:** MW 1053, 1089. **Television** and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Gillian Macey, Rosemary Smith and Susan Thompson.

SIR JOHN CARMICHAEL



He is survived by his wife Cecilia, whom he married in 1940, and by one son and three daughters.

Divorced but childless, he had earlier funded the educa-

John Edlin came to Southern Rhodesia from New Zealand in 1963 and went to work for a number of Rhodesian newspapers before leaving for Zambia and the Congo. Hired by the South African-owned Argus Africa News Service, he rebased himself in Ghana and travelled widely throughout

A black and white portrait of a man in a military uniform. He is wearing a peaked cap with a crest, a collared shirt, and a tie. He has a mustache and is looking directly at the camera. The image is grainy and appears to be a photocopy or a low-quality scan.

For eight years he served as general secretary of the Soil Association, working with E. F. Schmachter and Lady Eves Balfour. For many years during his retirement he was an active member of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, but was able to find time to play single-figure handicap golf and local cricket in and around Harleston in Norfolk, where he had made his home.

He is survived by his wife Juan, whom he married in 1939, and by their two sons and two daughters.

After leaving the Royal College of Art, Holland was immediately offered an art directorship with Foote Cone & Belding, working on a number of ads to advertising accounts such as Shell, Imperial Airways and the Empire Marketing Board. He went on to establish himself as a freelance artist and was much in demand.

With war on the horizon, Holland, together with Boswell and another artist James Flinton, set up the Influential Artists International Association, a pacifist organisation of artists protesting the war. Holland worked for the Ministry of Information, mainly on exhibition design, and it was here that he acquired the skills that were to equip him for his

Holland is survived by his second wife Jacqueline, two daughters from his first marriage and a son and a daughter from his second.

importance to the larger campaign the witness is Alenby, the commander-in-chief, for Lawrence's unique leadership and fitness for the highest command. Wavell, for his capacity for the greatest civilian offices. Sir Winston Churchill, for his scholarship. Hogarth, Sir Leonard Woolley, and Sir Ernest Barker, for his literary skill. Wells and Sir Winston Churchill again, for his paladin quality as an adversary. Clemenceau. It is permissible to prefer the judgment of the Lawrence Bureau to Mr Aldington's.

Lawrence is vulnerable to this kind of attack. A great popular legend was built up for him in the early 1930s, and inflated with anecdotes many of which today seem not only false but foolish. His life history was confused, and his personality was so complex, so hateably depraved, the growth of the legend, privately concealing it, in truth, vanity, of the kind that "buckled into the limelight," was Lawrence's besetting weakness. Some of his biographers have been addressed legions; he himself was convinced that he was a great man, and it could not escape from him. But no one ever sat up into the small hours while Lawrence pored over pages of fantastic adventure, and missed the look of slight disdain that came into his eyes as the former seemed to be accepting the impossibility of his liberally, will turn to the *Sewanee Review* for a precise record of the attitudes of the *Shannon* and the *Shannon*.

T. E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, became a legend in his lifetime, but there were always those who regarded his accounts of his career with some scepticism. Among these was the poet and novelist Richard Aldington.

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It does not follow, however, that the net value of the Arab revolt was insignificant and

Sri Lankan authorities stand firm

Australia may pull out of Colombo game

BY ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

FIASCO threatened the cricket World Cup yesterday as Australia, the favourites, considered the drastic step of forfeiting their first group game to avoid visiting Colombo, the bomb-ravaged Sri Lankan capital. A decision will be taken early next week, unless the organising committee acts first to alter the venue.

Graham Halbish, the chief executive of the Australian Cricket Board, confirmed yesterday that the possibility of forfeiture would be discussed at a scheduled board meeting next Monday and Tuesday. He added that more information from the Australian and Sri Lankan Governments was needed and repeated his earlier assurance that any player who feared for his safety could withdraw from the selected squad without penalties.

Thanks to the extraordinary format of the competition, which will probably entail only one Test-playing nation being eliminated after three weeks of group games, Australia are aware that they could sacrifice one game and still qualify for the quarter-finals with some comfort. If any other teams followed suit, Sri Lanka's progress would be virtually guaranteed before they played a game.

The Australian players' concerns, already aroused by unconnected death threats from fanatics in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, were inevitably heightened when a statement from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs warned against any non-essential travel to Sri Lanka, saying: "The possibility of attacks against airports, hotels and tourist facilities cannot be ruled out."

Ian Healy, the Australia vice-captain, said: "The bomb blast is no real surprise to me. It is why we were concerned in the first place." Michael Slater, the opening batsman, added his view that other teams may refuse to play in Sri Lanka. "I think that's the likely scenario," he said. "It's a bit scary, but we are going to

be guided by the board on this one." Craig McDermott, who has recently received a death threat from Sri Lanka, said on Australian television: "Maybe it puts all games in Colombo in jeopardy, not just Australian games."

Australia had already altered their itinerary to minimise time in Colombo. They have instead scheduled a three-day training camp in Brisbane, where the climate is similar, but it is intended that they should fly to Colombo directly after the opening ceremony in Calcutta. Alarmingly, their hotel is a single block away from the site of the bomb blast.



Slater: concerned about a "scary" situation

This is just the latest setback to a competition plagued by political tension and administrative mismanagement, but it could be the most serious.

If Australia were to take the ultimate measure of withdrawing their team, which nobody one has yet ruled out, the credibility of this troubled event would be destroyed. Although rugby teams from the New Zealand provinces of Wellington and Otago yesterday cancelled tours to Sri Lanka planned for later this month, the full sporting impact of the suicide bombing on Wednesday has yet to be felt. World Cup officials will come under increasing pressure to

eliminate Sri Lanka as a venue, but their problem is finding suitable last-minute alternatives when many cities in Pakistan and India are also suffering intense unrest.

Amrit Madhur, a member of the organising committee, said yesterday: "If need be, we may have to shift the venues of the four matches allotted to Sri Lanka; but that will only be a last option and only if Sri Lanka themselves refuse to hold the matches."

This unlikely scenario became still more improbable with Zimbabwe's agreement to go ahead with their game in the city on February 21. Denis Streak, their team manager, sounded a defiant note when he said: "We don't see it as a major problem. You could get run over by a bus in the street. It's just one of those things. We've thought about it, but we come from a country which knows about war and we're not going to worry about a few bombs."

Tissa Gunaratne, a spokesman for the Sri Lankan Cricket Board, said yesterday: "No country has contacted us over this bombing incident. We are going ahead with preparations. We have not even considered calling off the matches."

Streak, and the Sri Lankan cricket authorities, must prepare themselves for others to think differently on the matter. While the International Cricket Council remains largely powerless and wordless, and while the guarantees of tight security abound, human nature dictates that sporting teams will think twice before entering what amounts to a war zone.

There can be no assurances about safety in most parts of India and Pakistan, but Australia, at least, will be happier taking their chances there than in Sri Lanka.

It is now time that the organisers of this besieged competition acknowledge as much.

Simon Barnes, page 16



Parke hopes to recover from his chemotherapy treatment in time for the British Open in April. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Allsport

Brave Parke battling to beat illness

BY COLIN MCQUELLAN

AT THE end of November, Simon Parke was on top of the world. He was the main attraction at a special press conference at Lamb's Club in London. On one hand was England's first world team squash trophy; on the other, Caroline Varley, his new girlfriend.

Four weeks later, he was facing quite another examination, in the oncology department of the Nottingham City Hospital, where he learnt that a tumour in his right testicle, a teratoma, was a malignant form of cancer that required immediate surgery and a course of chemotherapy.

At 23, Parke is a former world junior champion and, for many experts, the best technical performer produced by English squash. He had reached the top of the national rankings and become the first string of the exciting young England squad that had snatched the world team title from Pakistan in Cairo.

"I was very shocked," he said yesterday. "I first noticed a swelling in my right testicle in December, but forgot to take the prescribed antibiotics while in Bombay playing the Mahindra Challenge."

"By Christmas, it was obvious something serious was going on, so I went back to the doctor on Boxing Day, saw an urologist and was in for surgery on January 2. I

thought they could just whip it out and that would be the end of it.

"I told everyone I had appendicitis and would be back in action after missing the national championships."

In fact, there is a month of chemotherapy to deal with the possibility of secondary malignancy. "A sort of insurance," Parke said. "Although even that was a shock. I thought at first I would be having radiotherapy which seemed less dire."

Parke is confident that he caught things early, took the right course of action and should be back in action in time for the British Open in April. His first 48-hour chemotherapy course finished late on

Wednesday. "I feel as sick as a dog and I can't stop hiccupping," he said. "I have a short course next week, just half an hour, then another 48-hour job the week after and another short one on February 22." In theory, he could stay in training throughout.

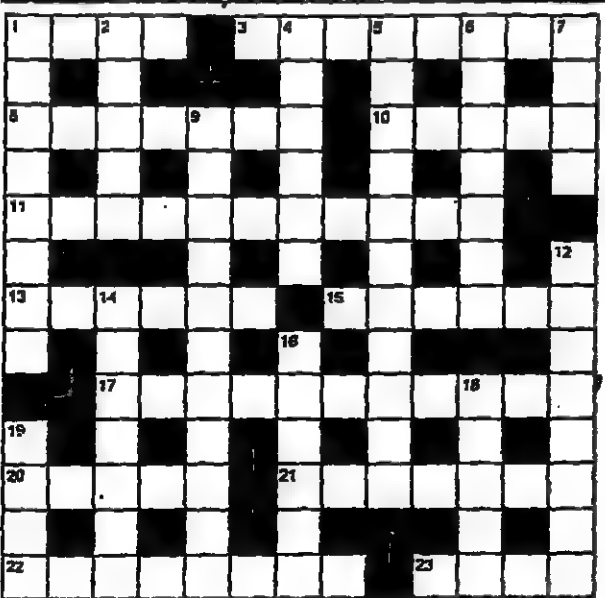
"I have been sitting in hospital with a lot of quite old people, some of whom might not come out," he said. "But I know there is a 95 per cent clear-up rate on testicular cancer, which quite a lot of young men get. We are the lucky ones: really. There are some side effects of the treatment, but losing a bit of hair seems unimportant. I might come back and start a trend in headscarves."

"I think this will change my life, get things into perspective a bit. It has been quite a learning period."

His rankings should not be much affected if he gets back into action as he anticipates, but Parke will certainly miss the finals of the HI-Tec PSA Super Series in Hatfield next month. It seems likely that Mark Calms, of Oxford, will move into his place among the top eight players of the year's grand prix action.

"That is almost the most irritating thing," Parke said. "I have qualified for those play-offs three years running now. The last two play-offs were held over for lack of sponsorship. Now they get it on and I am too ill to play."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 694

ACROSS

- 1 Give up (4)
- 3 Without penalty (4-4)
- 8 Pasta stuffed with meat (7)
- 10 Ship's petty officer (5)
- 11 Gardener's hut (7,4)
- 13 Of the universe (6)
- 15 French physicist; unit of current (6)
- 17 Pope's office: hold forth (11)
- 20 Ward off (5)
- 21 Part of line, insect body (7)
- 22 Decisive confrontation (8)
- 23 Long (family) story (4)

DOWN

- 1 Tortoise, crab shell (8)
- 2 Lifeboat crane (5)
- 4 Shrink in embarrassment (6)
- 5 Ranting (speaker) (3-8)
- 6 Little bit left (7)
- 7 Sicilian volcano (4)
- 9 Dogmatic (11)
- 12 Loss of one's marbles (8)
- 14 An overlord (7)
- 16 Puzzle for assembly (6)
- 18 Show-ring (5)
- 19 The Red Planet (4)

The solution to 693 will be published Wednesday, February 7

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Stanislaus banned for one year

BY ALYSON RIDD

ROGER STANISLAUS, the Leyton Orient defender, yesterday became the first English football player to be suspended from the game for drug abuse. The Football Association punished the former Arsenal, Brentford and Bury player for taking cocaine. The ban takes immediate effect for one year. Leyton Orient will decide at an emergency board meeting on Tuesday whether Stanislaus has any future at the club.

Medical evidence presented to the FA is consistent with Stanislaus, 27, having taken cocaine either just before kick-off, or even at half-time, on the day of the random drugs test at Barnet in November. Although a two- or three-year suspension had been anticipated, the one-year ban could still spell ruin for Stanislaus's professional career - particularly if Orient do not stand by him. Barry Hearn, the Orient chairman, has

made his views on drug abuse clear and has been keen to promote Orient as part of the east London community, including giving lectures for children on drug abuse. Stanislaus could alone by forming part of that education programme, but Hearn commented: "I think that would be up to the player and the FA to work out

Ferguson wins appeal 3
Aspirilla stumbling block 37
Freud on Friday 37

and depending on his future at Leyton Orient."

Traces of cocaine were found in samples provided by Stanislaus after Orient's 3-0 defeat at Underhill on November 25. Stanislaus told the FA disciplinary commission that he smoked a banned substance at a family funeral on the Thursday evening before the match. If

that were true, then the player would not have lived to face the commission, according to Dr David Cowan, the director of the Drugs Control Centre at King's College, London, who said that Stanislaus would have had to have taken a lethal dose of at least one kilogram of cocaine given the levels of the drug in the sample taken at 6.40pm on the day of the Endsleigh Insurance League third division match.

With medical evidence conclusively proving that Stanislaus took the drug in an attempt to enhance his performance, a one-year ban will be considered relatively lenient. The FA defended its decision on grounds that Stanislaus was not a habitual drugs user.

Stanislaus was not ordered to undergo a drugs rehabilitation scheme, which was the fate of Chris Armstrong, the Tottenham Hotspur forward, when random testing detected that he had used cannabis.

Carling sets Twickenham priority

BY DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

FOR all the talk of expansive rugby that has emanated from England and Wales this season, the primary objective for both teams will be to win when they meet at Twickenham tomorrow in the second round of the five nations' championship. Style, particularly for these developing teams, will be secondary.

If that seems at odds with the sentiments issuing, in particular, from Kevin Bowring, the Wales coach, it is not. "You don't develop as a side by losing," Jonathan Humphreys, the Wales captain, said. "If our best method of winning was to play catch and drive all the time, we would probably revert to it, but we haven't got that armory."

"Our best style is to move ball about because that's the only way we can compete with the world's best. We have tried

the slamming game up front, which doesn't work for us, so hopefully we can bring some fresh air to the championship."

Humphreys believes that, after defeat by France, the pressure will be on England, but that will only be true if England go into the match uncertain of how they intend to play. According to Will Carling, their captain, they are on an upward curve.

"Along the way, we would like to score tries, that's the aim in a rugby game," he said. "I love running rugby, that's what I want to play, but more than anything, I want to win."

"You get a sense of adventure through confidence, through a stable side, from the bond that develops among players. You can't just throw that together. This is a growing side, people are keen to have an input and always have been. Wales will be confident in their ability so we

FIVE NATIONS



CHAMPIONSHIP

will be wary of them and treat them with respect."

While England's players trained in private yesterday, one of their team-mates appeared to be close to recuperation. Tony Underwood, whose last appearance was against New Zealand in the World Cup semi-final, may take some part in Newcastle's game with West Hartlepool at Brierton Lane on Sunday.

Jack Rowell, the England manager, made a visit to

Newcastle last week to assess Underwood's fitness in a season that has left him short of competition on the wings. Underwood moved from Leicester to Newcastle while recovering from a knee operation and Rob Andrew, the director of rugby at Kingston Park, hinted that he may participate in the game on Sunday alongside Andrew himself, Nick Poppewell, Dean Ryan and Peter Walton. Ireland, who sit this weekend out, will take a close interest in the form of David Humphreys when he plays at stand-off half for Ulster against New South Wales on Tuesday.

The Oxford University student is challenging for a first cap against France on February 17, ahead of Eric Elwood, the incumbent, and Paul Burke.

Wales' new breed, page 34
Gerald Davies, page 34

MORSE

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Kremlin offer fails to halt showdown that could prove damaging for embattled President

Half a million Russian miners strike over pay

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL IN MOSCOW

HALF a million miners chose President Yeltsin's 65th birthday to go on a nationwide strike yesterday in an echo of the industrial action that helped to bring down Mikhail Gorbachev.

The strike went ahead despite last-minute attempts by the Government to dampen down what could turn into a political challenge to Mr Yeltsin ahead of the presidential elections in June. Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Prime Minister, promised the miners 600 billion roubles (\$84 million) on Tuesday. But most of the outstanding debts to the coal industry are from private companies, not the Government and cannot be paid back immediately.

Even conservative figures from the state-run coal company Rosugol put the number of strikers yesterday at more than 300,000 in 118 pits. The miners are demanding wages, which in some cases have not been paid since last October. Miners are better paid than most Russian workers but have to endure appalling living conditions and the health

hazards of poorly maintained mines.

In the northern city of Vorkuta 7,000 miners marched through the streets carrying banners saying "Down with hungry reforms!" and "It's there for the war but not our salaries" and calling on the Government to resign. Yuri Vishnevsky, a union leader, said that he had not yet had any serious proposals from the Government and that he did not think the strike would



Yeltsin: pledged to pay overdue salaries

end soon. At a noisy demonstration outside the Government headquarters in the middle of Moscow this week miners broke their hard hats on the ground in symbolic protest. They said they had no money left to feed their families.

A miners' strike in Ukraine, called simultaneously, brought out 600,000 workers, union leaders said. A group of disabled miners gathered in central Kiev to demand special privileges.

The heart of the Russian strike is the West Siberian region of Kuzbass, Russia's biggest mining belt. In 1989 and in the spring of 1991 the Kuzbass came out on strike against Mr Gorbachev and helped Mr Yeltsin to win the presidential elections a few months later. Now political allegiances have switched and 53 per cent of the population voted for the Communist Party in last December's parliamentary election.

It is too early to tell what the economic effects of the strike will be. Some pits have said they will strike for 48 hours, others that they are going on indefinite strike. According to Aleksandr Yevushenko, the Russian First Deputy Energy Minister, some remote areas of Siberia and the Far East could be left without power in a couple of days if the strike goes on. The steel industry, which is almost completely reliant on coal, will also suffer.

At the heart of the problem is a vicious circle of unpaid debts between the Government and industry. Many large state companies have not paid the taxes they owe to the Finance Ministry, which in turn says that its coffers are empty. Factories, for their part, say they cannot pay taxes because they are owed money by their customers.

President Yeltsin has signed a series of decrees this week to pay overdue salaries, but has not indicated how the budget, which sets strict inflationary guidelines, will pay for them.

In addition to the miners, teachers have staged a three-day strike in 51 Russian regions of Russia this week, again complaining of unpaid wages. Air traffic controllers met in Moscow yesterday and voted to postpone a threatened strike until the end of the month.

If the situation does not ease soon, it will be a perfect propaganda weapon for the Communist Party against Mr Yeltsin in the presidential election in June.



Viktor Chernomyrdin and Al Gore are served with a hot dog and a sandwich in New York. The Russian later tackled a pastrami sandwich as well

'Pastrami summit' leaves New York diners in awe

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

AMERICA'S Vice-President Al Gore, has found a new form of political dialogue: "deli diplomacy". Mr Gore took Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, to lunch at the quintessential New York delicatessen, in what has been dubbed "the pastrami summit", the two politicians joined the lunch-time crowd at Katz's, a Jewish deli on Manhattan's lower East Side which, since 1883, has been known for its sardonic staff and big helpings.

Things began uncertainly when Mr Chernomyrdin, awed by the bountiful

array of pickles, handcut meats and Dr Brown's celery soda, said that he would merely take a hot dog. "A hot dog?" stilled counter-boy David Tarowsky, 33, who has worked at Katz's for 33 years and has "seen 'em all". Mr Chernomyrdin, aware of his gaffe, recovered quickly by ordering one of Katz's celebrated, four-inch-thick pastrami sandwiches. He created a minor sensation by taking it in addition to the hot dog.

Mr Gore, who likes to watch his weight, made only a meek attempt at his pastrami and corned beef on rye with mustard. As the order was shouted down the counter by Mr Tarowsky, Katz's regulars nodded

grudging respect, but the Vice-President managed only three bites before summoning a doggy bag. Meanwhile, Mr Chernomyrdin went to work on his lunch and showed himself to be a trencherman. He demolished the hot dog, wiped his brow, and then made creditable headway with the pastrami mountain.

There was little opportunity for diplomatic chat as the two men sat at an ordinary table complete with ketchup bottle, napkin dispenser and sugar funnel. A determined Mr Chernomyrdin, chewing ever more slowly, came up only for air and the occasional draught of Diet Pepsi. After 20 minutes he, too, had to call for a doggy

bag, but not before his hand had been shaken in admiration by numerous fellow diners.

Fred Austin, co-owner of Katz's, had earlier said that the Vice-President and his guest would be treated "rudely" — like we treat everybody else. It's part of the New York ethos. As they left, however, the deli's manager, Robert Albinder, conceded: "The Russian guy never stood a chance, but he did well."

Mr Gore left no tip, leading to unfair remarks that "there is clearly only one Tipper in the family" — Mrs Gore's name being Tipper. However, Mr Albinder said that tips were not obligatory for counter-served customers.

Yeltsin's foe vows to revive Soviet might

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE man Washington most fears will depose President Yeltsin in June was peddling a distinctly threatening world view in the pages of a leading American newspaper yesterday.

Writing in *The New York Times*, Gennadi Zyuganov, the leader of the Russian Communist Party, which showed such strong gains in national elections last December, lambasted the "neo-

liberal" regimes of Mr Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev, denigrating perestroika and branded Moscow's attempts at economic reform a disaster.

Offering a blueprint of Russian-American relations post-Yeltsin, Mr Zyuganov said the Communists viewed as dangerous the lack of military and strategic parity between the two countries after the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

"We would restore the might of the Russian state and its status in the world. That

would make its policies incomparably more predictable and responsible than they are today," Mr Zyuganov wrote.

And we see the restoration of the union of the former Soviet peoples — based on voluntary association — as a historical necessity dictated by Russia's needs and those of world security."

Foreign policy would be limited to maintaining state security. Nato expansion and the deployment of alliance troops in the former Yugoslavia were, he said, examples of

how such institutions claimed the right to interfere in other people's affairs.

"Several years have passed since the Cold War ended, but relations between our countries are far from harmonious," he said. "Though it must renounce useless and excessive military spending, Russia never was — or could be — a 'junior partner'. Any policy that counts on Russia's remaining in its humiliating position, following in the American wake, is doomed to defeat."

Iranian banker disappears 'with £9m'

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

IRAN's most trusted banker in Paris has disappeared, allegedly taking with him £70 million (£9 million) belonging to the Tehran Government.

A Marxist-Leninist group opposed to the Iranian Government claims that Hedayat Ashtari Larki, the director of the Paris branch of Bank Sepah, Iran's oldest bank, has joined its ranks.

Tehran insists that he is merely a thief and a Paris magistrate is examining the case. Agents of the Iranian secret service are reportedly hunting the missing man while their counterparts in Britain and France would also like to find the elusive banker.

For seven years Mr Ashtari handled sensitive economic transactions between France and Iran, but over the past year relations between the banker and his political bosses in Tehran had begun to sour. In December, Mr Ashtari

suddenly moved out of his Paris flat, along with his wife and children. He has not been located since — nor, according to Tehran, has millions of francs from accounts held by Bank Sepah.

Mr Ashtari's motives, however, may be political. The dissident Organisation of Iranian People's Fedaii Guerrillas, one of the exiled groups opposed to the Tehran regime,

has since claimed that the missing banker is a committed member of the group.

The first sign that the banker was no longer getting on well with his superiors came when he allegedly refused to send a \$6 million (£4 million) commission claimed by some of his bosses for negotiating the sale of three Airbus planes to the company, Saffari.

Mr Ashtari later protested

when the Tehran Government seized \$1.45 million from the bank account of a company it believed to be linked to the opposition group. The banker is also believed to have played the money markets through a specialist Bureau de Change in Paris.

He was ordered to return to Tehran late last year. He did not do so, and on November 23 his flat in Paris was broken

into and his wife was attacked, according to a report in *L'Express* magazine. A few days later Mr Ashtari and his family went into hiding.

The dissident group has warned the Iranian secret service that if anything happens to Mr Ashtari "the response will be severe". The group claimed that the banker had found it "more and more difficult to accept the anti-popular actions of the Iranian regime and kept his distance from them. The regime tried to get Mr Ashtari back to Iran at all costs."

As the banker in charge of some of Iran's most delicate economic operations, Mr Ashtari is believed to have been privy to information the Tehran regime would rather not have disclosed. "As soon as Mr Ashtari is safe, he will explain these scandals in detail," the dissident group's statement said.

Tehran missile test fuels Gulf fears

FROM REUTERS IN DUBAI

IRAN has restored its capability to fire anti-ship missiles at sea, raising fears in the Gulf about Tehran's growing ability to control the world's largest oil-exporting shipping lane, analysts said yesterday.

American forces patrolling the Gulf this week said that

Iran test-fired a Chinese anti-ship missile on January 6 from a vessel in the Arabian Sea just outside the Gulf.

"Iran now has an anti-ship capability at sea. This is the first such capability Iran has had at sea since 1988 [when Iranian vessels were attacked by American forces in the Gulf]," a Western officer said.

Military sources could not say how many of the radar-guided missiles Iran had, but they said they could be mounted on patrol boats, allowing them to be moved freely in the waterway. The missiles have a range of 60 miles.

American forces clashed several times with Iranian units during the Iran-Iraq War when both sides attacked Gulf shipping.

be consolidated with the creation of an international Siberian tiger sanctuary in Russia. She said: "If the proposed sanctuary is financed, it will provide a secure eco-system for a whole host of other threatened wildlife."

The Siberian tiger is the largest of the species, and its street value can be as high as £40,000 for skins and bone, which is ground down for a medicine or aphrodisiac.

The tigers are sometimes capable of defending themselves. Interfax reported this week that two tigers had killed a hunter, the third such victim in a month.

Wildlife brigade stalks tiger poachers in Siberia

BY LEVIA LINTON



A Siberian tiger: threat of extinction has diminished

TIGER poachers in Siberia, who often work in league with the Russian mafia, are being beaten by wildlife patrols.

Experts feared the extinction of the Siberian tiger within four years as poachers had reduced a growing population of 400 tigers in 1989 to just 150 by the beginning of 1994. But poaching of the animal has fallen by 75 per cent in the past 18 months after the introduction of special patrols, according to the Investigative Network, a wildlife conservation charity.

Operation Amba, an anti-poaching brigade launched by the Russian Ministry of the

Environment two years ago and funded by environmental groups worldwide, has helped to reduce tiger poaching from an estimated 60 a year to between ten and 15, a report by the network says.

The brigade consists of four mobile anti-poaching teams in the Primorsky region, which is home to 85 per cent of the Siberian tiger population. Each team, of about five people, is equipped with at least one military-style truck and radios. The operation costs about £100,000 a year.

Sue Fisher, one of the authors of the report, hopes the anti-poaching teams will

be consolidated with the creation of an international Siberian tiger sanctuary in Russia. She said: "If the proposed sanctuary is financed, it will provide a secure eco-system for a whole host of other threatened wildlife."

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Admiral of Black Sea Fleet is sacked

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT YELTSIN has dismissed Admiral Eduard Balutin, the commander of the troubled Black Sea Fleet, Tass reported yesterday.

Pavel Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister, ordered Admiral Balutin to transfer his command to Vice-Admiral Gennadi Suchkov, who will assume the post as head of the fleet temporarily, the news agency said.

Admiral Balutin had long opposed the division of the fleet between Russia and Ukraine and his uncompromising stance was increasingly viewed in Moscow as an obstacle in improving relations between the two countries.

Problems arose over the jurisdiction of the fleet after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The fleet is based in Sevastopol, a port on the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea which is located in Ukraine.

Both Russia and Ukraine, eager to build up its armed forces as a newly independent state, claimed control of the fleet and it took several years of tough negotiations to reach agreement on its division. There had also been sporadic clashes between vessels in the fleet crewed by Russians and Ukrainians.

Complete agreement has still to be achieved on the final breakdown of all naval hardware as well as the terms under which Russia will be able to operate the naval bases in Ukraine.

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Critics of £440m aid for ailing airline say decision flies in face of fair competition

Britain considers legal challenge to Iberia handout

By Harvey Elliott, Air Correspondent

THE British Government may mount a legal challenge to the European Commission's decision to let Iberia, Spain's national airline, receive another £440 million in state aid.

Tony Newton, the leader of the House, told the Commons yesterday that the Government had not ruled out such a challenge. "This seems to us at best a weak decision which threatens to undermine all our efforts to establish fair competition in the Community aviation market," he said.

Tory MPs, who expressed their anger at the handout yesterday, claim that Iberia is a state monopoly, still in the grip of powerful unions, nepo-

tistic, protected, inefficient and uncaring of the needs of its passengers. Spain's state-owned giant has, they say, failed to come to terms with the new Europe, it is bureaucratic and cosseted by a chauvinistic Government anxious only to "fly the flag".

Iberia, they claim, not only pays many of its staff — especially its pilots — ridiculously high salaries, but distorts competition by cutting fares to unrealistic levels, safe in the knowledge that if they lose money the Government will bail them out.

Many pilots joke that nepotism is so engrained on the airline that the flight deck of an Iberian jet is the closest

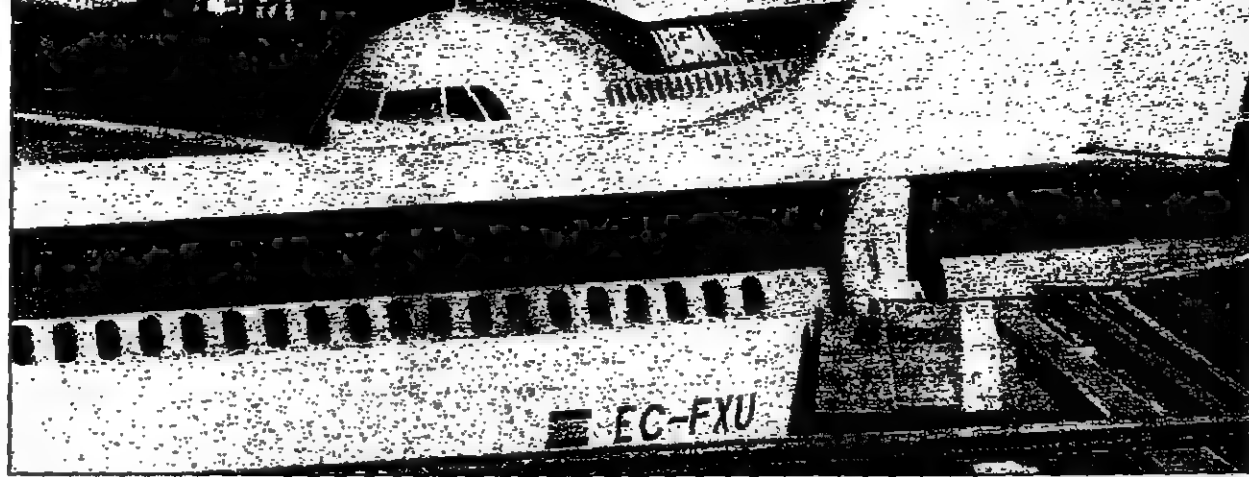
thing to heaven because the son is always sitting at the right hand of the father.

Other critics say that, having been given European Commission approval in 1992 for £600 million of state money, the lumbering airline has formally been given the go-ahead to receive another £450 million and an understanding that they will get another £100 million from the Spanish Government next year.

However, Iberia considers much of the criticism from the likes of British Airways and British Midland to be based on a misunderstanding of the Spanish tradition that senior staff ensure that their children and other relatives are in line for a job when one arises.

Iberia says that because Spain is on the periphery of Europe, it cannot compete with the dominant northern airlines such as BA. It does not have a global network of routes and often has to fly on unprofitable ones.

The airline is also smarting under the domination of the holiday market by British and German charter operators which are, with typical Spanish hospitality, welcomed with open arms.



Part of Iberia's fleet at Madrid airport. About 20 aircraft are to be sold and a pay freeze has been imposed.

The money Iberia has received is not state aid, the airline argues, but has been raised by Tena, the quasi-governmental holding organisation that has sold other state-owned enterprises and is using the proceeds to keep Iberia alive until its restructuring plan can take effect.

The planned changes are tough and will mean that many of the airline's own investments will have to be disposed of. At least 8,500 staff will have been laid off between

1991 and 1999; a pay freeze is in force; almost 20 aircraft are going to be sold; and tight new productivity targets will have to be met while the Commission keeps a careful watch on how the cash money is spent.

It was an argument which swayed Neil Kinnock, the Transport Commissioner. Britain's airlines are waiting until a transcript of the Commission's decision is available before deciding whether to take their case to the European Court as they did with

Air France. But with other state-owned airlines lining up to follow Iberia's path, to Mr Kinnock's door, the British are determined to prevent any further handouts.

Swissair is the only other large European scheduled carrier which is wholly privately owned. Lufthansa is rapidly shedding its state holding and becoming more aggressive in its marketing. Olympic Air, Lingus, Air France and TAP Portugal are, like Iberia, 100 per cent state-owned. Alitalia

has an 86.4 per cent state holding, Sabena 62 per cent, Finnair 61 per cent, Austrian 52 per cent, SAS 50 per cent and KLM 38 per cent.

Since 1991, six European airlines have received capital injections through their governments of more than £7 billion, which private airlines could not have raised. Where, British companies are asking, is the promised "level playing field" in European aviation?

Leading article, page 17

HOW BA BEATS IBERIA		
	BRITISH AIRWAYS	IBERIA
Shareholders	241,754	1,000,000
Turnover	£7 billion	£2.8 billion
Debt	£3.7 billion	£1.2 billion
Operating profit	£881 million	£32 million
Pre-tax profit	£327 million	£269 million loss
Aircraft	283	97
Passengers	30.5 million	19 million
Average loads	71.6 per cent	68.8 per cent
Destinations	189	73
Flights per day	1,000	450
Employees	53,000	25,576

National interests prevail in Brussels battles for state subsidies

BRUSSELS yesterday shrugged off the row over the EU Commission's decision to allow the Spanish state to shovel £440 million into Iberia. Officials acknowledged, however, that, coming on top of a string of similar cases, the Iberia rescue has dented the Commission's credibility.

"We got a pretty good deal considering the pressures involved," said an official close to the bargaining that resulted in the Commission approving the second big funding for Iberia in four years, despite its policy that loss-makers can only get one lot of state aid.

Neil Kinnock, the Transport Commissioner who is responsible for the airline industry, was taking

Coming after previous cases involving the prestige of national bodies, the handout has dented the Commission's credibility, Charles Bremner writes

comfort from the argument that his team had squeezed down Iberia's initial demand for a sum some 60 per cent higher and imposed stringent terms for restructuring which have not gone down well in Spain. They also emphasised their finding that the case did not involve direct state aid but a commercial investment by a state-controlled holding company. The argument has set industry experts chortling.

Mr Kinnock's uneasy perfor-

mance when he explained the deal on Tuesday suggested a man whose free-market principles, proclaimed with fervour when he arrived in Brussels a year ago, had come off the worse from 12 months in office. A similar weathering has afflicted Karel van Miert, the Flemish Socialist who polices state aid in industries apart from transport.

So much national interest is at stake in such decisions that political considerations prevail. As one official said: "There was just no way that Brussels was going to put to death a national flag-carrier, however lame it looks."

Such realism helped to swing Sir Leon Brittan, Britain's senior commissioner and former competition chief, behind the Iberia decision, which was taken unanimously by the 20 commissioners. Some officials dismissed the British criticism as a reflection of the "Europhobia" in the Conservative Government.

"They would have been screaming in the other direction if the Commission had scuppered some cherished British institution," one said. Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish Prime Minister, had campaigned during his presidency of the EU in

the past six months to ensure that two big state rescues went through. These were Iberia and £235 million of aid to Seat, Volkswagen's loss-making Spanish subsidiary. Two years ago, the might of the French state was brought to bear to win approval for £2.4 billion for Air France, £5.5 billion for Credit Lyonnais and £1.3 billion for Groupe Bull, the nationalised computer firm. Other airlines queuing up successfully at the till were Greece's Olympic, Air Portugal and Aer Lingus.

Britain, officials note, has lobbied for itself in two recent subsidy cases. Mr Van Miert's department is on the verge of approving most of an £80 million package in which

British taxpayers will help to finance a new Jaguar plant at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham. Without the money, Ford, Jaguar's American parent, said it would switch production to America. Delays in the approval were ascribed by some in Whitehall to annoyance in Brussels over the Government's obstruction in other EU decisions. In the other case, Brussels last year backed a British grant of £61 million, contested by EU clothing companies, to a Northern Ireland textiles plant.

Officials say the Commission's decisions have been influenced by a climate in which the fear of unemployment has become the paramount force on the Continent.

Italy gets new Prime Minister

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

PRESIDENT SCALFARO yesterday ended weeks of political uncertainty by nominating Antonio Maccanico, a highly respected bureaucrat and constitutional expert, to head a broad-based Government of National Unity in Italy.

The lira rose immediately, and Signor Maccanico said he hoped his economic programme would enable the lira to rejoin the exchange-rate mechanism.

If Signor Maccanico succeeds in forming a government, the move will avoid disruptive elections during Italy's presidency of the European Union which lasts until

June. It will also provide Italy with a breathing space during which the stalled constitutional reforms begun three years ago can be carried through.

Sources close to the coalition talks reported last night that the Maccanico reform programme included proposals for a "French style" direct election of the Italian President. At present the head of state is elected by parliament and is largely a figurehead, although he plays a key role in coalition negotiations.

Any such change to the constitution would need a two-thirds majority in parliament. The details of the proposal have yet to be made clear.

Many Italians have reservations about investing too much power in one person, a legacy of the Mussolini dictatorship.

Signor Scalfaro looked relieved, and said that patience had paid off. His move comes after weeks of speculation after the resignation on January 11 of Lamberto Dini, the interim Prime Minister appointed just over a year ago after the collapse of the centre-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of Forza Italia.

Signor Scalfaro's aim is to end the instability caused by an apparently endless series of weak coalitions known as "revolving door" govern-

ments. Signor Maccanico's administration will be Italy's 55th government since the Second World War.

The outcome is a setback for Gianfranco Fini, the leader of the "post-Fascist" Alleanza Nazionale, who almost alone among the main party leaders had held out for elections. Opinion polls suggested that he would have gained votes, whereas Signor Berlusconi, who is on trial for corruption, would have lost ground as would the parties of the Centre Left. Signor Scalfaro played on these fears by threatening to call an election unless the parties came to terms.

Signor Fini nonetheless joined other party leaders in giving the Maccanico appointment a cautious welcome, saying the Prime Minister-designate had "always acted impartially".

Signor Maccanico will today begin to try to form a Cabinet. It will include the key parties of both Left and Right, but is unlikely to include the Northern League led by Umberto Bossi, who yesterday remarked caustically that Maccanico sounded like a mechanic in Italian and that the new Prime Minister was yet another "technocrat" rather than a real politician.

Signor Maccanico said he hoped his Government would enjoy "solid and serious" backing and could continue the reform begun in 1993, when Italy adopted a partial first-past-the-post electoral system, in conjunction with proportional representation.

Shadowy 'fixer' takes top job

BY RICHARD OWEN

LIKE his predecessor Lamberto Dini, Antonio Maccanico has the reputation of being a technocrat and is hence a suitable candidate to pursue Italy's reform process.

However, unlike Signor Dini, who alienated politicians while in office, Signor Maccanico has some hope of gaining all-party backing.

Now 71, he has spent a lifetime in the backroom of Italian politics, and as one observer noted: "He knows where the bodies are buried."

After years at the elbow of successive Italian leaders as a "fixer", Signor Maccanico has instant access to the most powerful figures in Italy. He

acquired the nickname "The Mechanic", not only as a play on his name but also because of his skill in manipulating the government machine. Now, can emerge from the shadows as leader in his own right. He served as head of the Prime Minister's office for Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who was leader between April 1993 and May 1994.

Born in August 1924, near Naples, Signor Maccanico studied law at Pisa. He became a parliamentary official in 1947 at the age of 23, when Italy was reshaping its democratic structure after Mussolini's period of fascism. Except for a one-year stint as a banker, he has been a career politician.



Maccanico: adept at backroom politics

Spa cures run dry in Kohl's painful cuts

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

GERMAN workers, particularly the rheumatic ones accustomed to regular, paid spa cures, were yesterday up in arms about plans by Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, to cut social welfare spending to keep the country on target for monetary union.

"This could hit us very badly," said a spokesman for Germany's spa resorts, which have been benefiting from unusually generous provisions allowing ordinary workers to take the waters. Some

civil servants have been taking cures every two years, with the cost paid by the state health insurance and their salary paid by the employer as usual. Now Herr Kohl wants Germany to take only three weeks' cure every four years. If the cure lasts longer, the patient will have to sacrifice part of his or her annual holiday.

For many Germans this will be the most painful cut of all. Spa life — with its regular glasses of fresh spring water, its mud and herbal packs — is

one of the few remaining throwbacks to the leisureed 19th century. In the years of the post-war economic miracle, the annual cure provided by the welfare state kept public service and industrial workers going at their breakneck pace.

The most fashionable spas, such as Baden-Baden, were usually out of financial reach — hotel costs were not always paid — but scores of minor German resorts, almost always identified by the preface *Bad* (bath), rediscovered old

mineral springs and set themselves up as centres of restorative medicine. Doctors have usually been understanding in signing release forms for a cure.

The fact is that Herr Kohl's package is designed more to encourage and stimulate small businesses than to prompt workers to work harder. Unemployment benefit will be available for longer than one year only to those older than 45 years. Previously the lower age limit was 42.

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Transatlantic alliance is vital for European security, French President tells Congress

Chirac calls for reform of Nato's military role

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CHIRAC, on the first state visit to America by a French leader in 12 years, yesterday proposed a transatlantic charter to reform Nato and place more responsibility for security on Europe.

In his address to a joint session of Congress before talks with President Clinton, M Chirac called for a renewed partnership between the United States and its Nato allies. He said American commitment, both militarily and politically, was still essential to the stability and security of a growing Europe, but he emphasised that "Washington need not always play an active role."

"The best security today lies in solidarity," said M Chirac after receiving a standing ovation from the Republican majority on Capitol Hill. "The reform of Nato must also enable the European allies to assume fully their responsibilities, with the support of Nato facilities, wherever the United States does not wish to engage its ground forces."

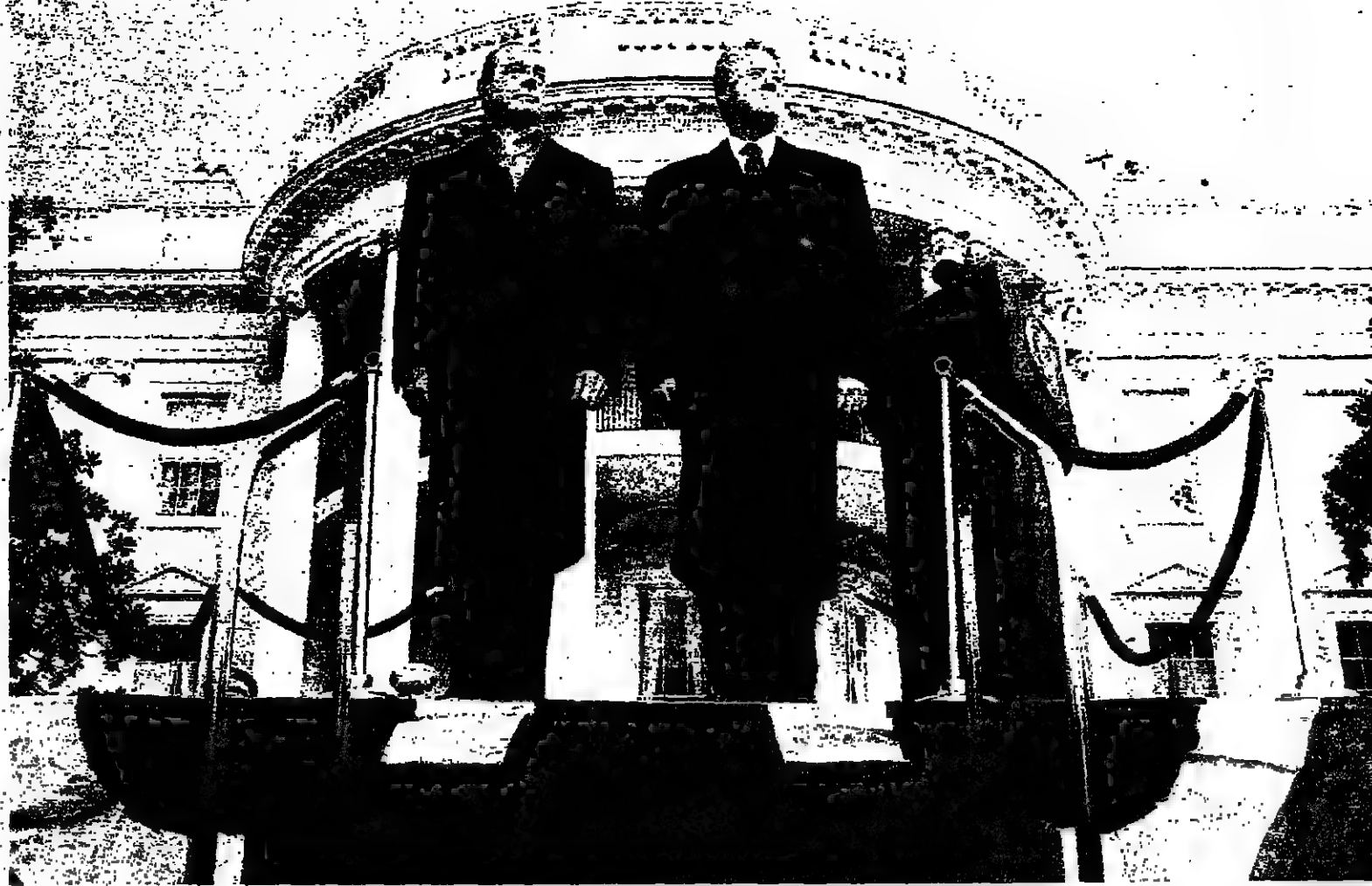
Thirty years after de Gaulle had withdrawn French troops from Nato, he said, France was once more at the heart of the alliance. In reforming

Nato, the French President recommended the adoption of a charter as a "solemn sign of the reality of our alliance" and a pillar of global leadership in the 21st century.

An enlarged European Union and a single currency would be a natural part of European progression. Already, M Chirac said, there was a balance between the two continents with three million Europeans working in American companies and the same number of Americans working in Europe.

The joint military action in Bosnia-Herzegovina between Britain, France and America underscored the need for Nato to adapt similarly in terms of security. "To a universe that is no longer that in which it was born," M Chirac said, "I call for a renewed partnership between Europe, engaged in its own construction, including in the field of defence, and our North American allies."

A number of Democrats had boycotted the address yesterday, claiming that M Chirac's proclamation on Monday to abandon nuclear tests had come too late in the wake of six French experiments in the South Pacific. He



President Chirac, left, and President Clinton outside the White House yesterday during the ceremony to welcome the first French leader in 12 years

nevertheless received warm applause after making a pledge that France had finished its nuclear testing, "once and for all".

Republicans have long admired the "bulldozer" style of M Chirac's foreign policy which, before recent American intervention in Bosnia and Ireland, had been a refreshing contrast to the wavering image of Mr Clinton. For his part, M Chirac has been a

staunch admirer of America since his sojourn in the United States as a student at Harvard in 1953. He washed dishes at Howard Johnson, was briefly engaged to a girl from South Carolina who called him "honey chile" and wound up in New Orleans courting such jazz greats as Cab Calloway.

Despite the warmth of his reception, particularly from Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, M Chirac touched on

several areas which will undermine the more radical isolationist programme of some Republicans long opposed to American intervention in the world and still resentful of M Chirac for his influential role in reversing American policy over Bosnia.

Insisting that America resist any temptation towards unilateralism, the French leader said that Europe offered three times the amount of foreign

aid as the United States. Citing threats from Aids and disasters like Chernobyl, illegal immigration, religious fanaticism and ethnic hatred, M Chirac said the biggest threat was underdevelopment.

It was a moral obligation for the West, he said, to help the poorest nations of the world to prosper. He urged Congress to support the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation and other international bodies

that brought the alliance closer together diplomatically and in terms of trade.

The address, the fourth by a French President since the Second World War, was conducted in French, a language that was studiously absent from the White House menu last night. Under Hillary Clinton, state dinner menus are written in English rather than in the French used in the Reagan and Bush years.

Botched brewery visit fails to refresh flagging Dole

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

ROBERT DOLE'S handlers arranged for the 72-year-old presidential candidate to visit a New Hampshire brewery late on Wednesday, then abruptly cancelled the engagement when they discovered it produced a beer called "Old Man Ale".

Hours later the visit was restored after Steve Merrill, New Hampshire Governor and leading Dole supporter, argued that to be seen dodging the age issue would look even worse. Mr Dole gamely held up a bottle of "Old Man Ale" for the cameras, tasted it, and declared it "young and fresh".

This botched outing underscored how everything is suddenly going wrong for Mr Dole after months as the Republicans' undisputed frontrunner. A Boston Globe poll yesterday gave Steve Forbes, the free-spending publishing tycoon, a nine-point lead over Mr Dole in New Hampshire with less than three weeks until that state's primary. A second, more reliable

poll gave Mr Dole a six-point lead over Mr Forbes, but everyone agrees the race has narrowed dramatically over the past few days.

In Washington, Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, further boosted Mr Forbes's credibility by praising him as a "genuine risk taker" and challenging the conventional wisdom that a political outsider cannot win the Republican nomination.

The Republican party's worries go beyond producing a viable presidential nominee, however. Exit polls showed it lost Tuesday's Senate by-election in Oregon because women — infuriated by Republican assaults on social programmes, abortion rights and Hillary Clinton — turned out in unprecedented force and voted heavily Democratic.

National polls confirm that the "gender gap" has widened to historic proportions since the Republicans seized Capitol Hill in 1994 and this could cost the party dearly in November's congressional and presidential elections.

In Oregon 10 per cent more men voted Republican than Democrat, while 8 per cent more women voted Democrat than Republican. What made the difference was that a remarkable 57 per cent of voters were women.

A Wall Street Journal poll in December showed men equally divided between Mr Clinton and Mr Dole, but women backing the President by 54 per cent to 36. They overwhelmingly considered social problems such as education and poverty more important than the Republican priority of deficit reduction.

A principal reason the Republicans won Congress in 1994 was a low female vote with a majority of white women voting Republican. Mr Clinton won the White House in 1992 with just 46 per cent of the women's vote. In 1976 men and women voted in identical percentages for Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter.

Monks held over foetus 'swindle'

Tokyo: Police arrested nine Buddhist monks yesterday on suspicion of organising swindles that may total \$200 million (Perseus Hodson writes). Two of the men are accused of demanding cash for exorcising "bad spirits", including the souls of aborted foetuses.

According to Japanese Buddhist belief, the souls inhabit a nether world and prayers, offerings and monetary donations are necessary to help them to a better world. Gishun Nishikawa, a senior monk at Myokakuji temple in Wakayama prefecture, and Keijiro Yano, who heads Monganji temple in Nagoya, were arrested on suspicion of fraud. Another seven monks have been arrested in related frauds and swindles at 27 temples throughout Japan.

Brother Nishikawa is alleged to have developed a lucrative sideline selling images of the Buddha to women who had abortions, cashing in on their sense of guilt and superstition.

Death toll mounts as seized Tamils name suicide bomber

FROM VIJITHA YAPA IN COLOMBO

THE death toll in the bombing at the Central Bank building in Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, rose to 81 yesterday.

Two of the attackers, captured by the public as they fled from the scene on Wednesday, told police that they were members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The two men, known simply as Ratu and Kintu, said the suicide lorry driver was called Raju. The lorry, filled with rice husk, had left Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka on Monday and had arrived in Colombo the next day. It was escorted to the Central Bank by three trishaws filled with armed rebels. The two captured rebels had a powerful radio receiver, rifles, grenades and suicide kits when they were overpowered.

Meanwhile, President Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said the attack was an act of desperation by the Tigers. She said it had come at a time when the Government was making a genuine effort to

find a lasting solution to the causes of terrorism. She said terrorism had to be eliminated and thanked the people for their patience.

It is significant that for the first time after a major bomb explosion, the Government did not rush to impose a curfew. The people reacted calmly and members of the minority Tamil community said they did not feel threatened, but were frightened. The attempt by successive governments to show that terrorism by a few individuals should not be used to condemn the minority Tamil community seems to have succeeded.

The Governor of the Central Bank, A S Jayewardene, said that money in the vaults was safe as were certain vital documents. The activities of the bank would be back to normal in a few days. Mr Jayewardene said that of the bank's 2,300 employees, about 1,800 worked in the bombed building. He said 40 of their staff had died and 152 were

injured. Banks and business houses functioned as normal yesterday except for those in the immediate area of the blast. But traffic on the main road past the president's residence of Temple Trees, near the British High Commission, which was reduced to one lane each way from last year, will be further restricted. Only cars will be allowed to use the road from Friday.

Meanwhile, hospital authorities said 53 of the 81 dead had so far been identified. Soldiers and firemen who began clearing the rubble yesterday feared there may be more bodies buried under the wreckage, though the chances of finding anyone alive was described as "very remote".

Hospital authorities said the majority of the more than 1,400 people injured were treated for cuts from glass. Doctors at the Government General Hospital said they had never experienced so many people needing medical attention simultaneously, but that they had coped.

WORLD SUMMARY

Internet porn leads to arrest

Tokyo: A businessman was arrested in Tokyo yesterday on suspicion of distributing pornography on the Internet (Perseus Hodson writes).

Hiroshi Kamekura, 28, is the first person in Japan to be arrested in a criminal case involving the Internet. The arrest followed a police raid on his home and the house of a high school student. Mr Kamekura has admitted to police that he knew it was wrong to disseminate pornographic images, but said he was interested by the Internet's operation.

Although Japan is one of the most advanced countries when it comes to computers, the Japanese have been slow to catch on to the Internet, not least because most communications are in English.

Mugabe faces poll challenge

Harare: President Mugabe lost the chance of a walkover in his quest for a third term as Zimbabwe's executive head of state when officials accepted the challenges put forward by Abel Muzorewa, 71, who was Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, and Ndabingi Sithole, 77, the veteran African nationalist leader (Michael Hartnack writes). Observers say neither has a chance of defeating Mr Mugabe.

Bahrain expels Iranian envoy

Bahrain, shaken by demonstrations, expelled an Iranian diplomat for spying (Michael Binyon writes). The Government has virtually named Iran as the instigator of the riots, largely by Shia groups which have called for a restoration of the 1975 constitution. Three dissident Muslim clergy, trained in Iran, were expelled in December 1994.

Dissident in line for peace prize

Peking: China criticised the nomination of Wei Jingsheng, a leading Chinese dissident, for the Nobel Peace Prize (James Pringle writes). It said Mr Wei, sentenced to 14 years' jail last December, was a convicted criminal and not qualified for such an award. He was nominated by 81 members of the US Congress and Japanese politicians.

The father of all ambitions

Jerusalem: A man who has 42 children in the United Arab Emirates, aims to be the country's biggest father (Christopher Walker writes). "If God wills, I may get 60 sons," Salim Juma Mubarak told the daily Khaleej Times. His three wives are all expecting babies. He has 22 sons.



How Dunhill viewed glamour in the 1950s

Videos put the fire back into smoking

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

SMOKERS in America, besieged by the anti-nicotine lobby and clean-air fanatics, are buoying their morale by watching "cigarette videos".

The 30-minute films, distributed discreetly among addicts of the weed, show women doing little more than smoking a succession of cigarettes. In modern America there are few things more wicked.

Edward Luissier, a shopkeeper from Oklahoma City, has made a selection of eight films which are selling in increasing numbers to embattled smokers. The \$25 (£16) movies feature fully clad women fighting up and then smoking as many as ten cigarettes. The films concentrate on

smoking techniques, such as the "French inhale", once popular on the silver screen. The smoke is exhaled momentarily from the mouth, and then inhaled briskly up the nostrils. Some of Mr Luissier's films dwell on packet opening, or the tapping out of the first cigarette.

Mr Luissier, 42, who learned to appreciate Winston cigarettes while a sergeant in the US army, took his inspiration from hazy memories of New York in the 1950s. "I have tried to recreate all those elegant women who used to smoke, wearing veiled hats and opera gloves," he said yesterday. He researched the photographic techniques of old black-and-white

portraitists and invited female friends to sit for his cameras. The films bear their names, for instance Paula and April. His typical customer, he said, is "at the upper end of the bell curve, intellectually".

Mike Williams, editor of a pro-smoking newsletter, *Smoke Signals*, said that a number of such videos were being made, and sold healthily. A very few, made by companies separate from Mr Luissier, contain mildly suggestive moments, but most of them eschew sexuality. Professor Richard Klein, of the French (Gitanes) department of Cornell University, New York, said: "The anti-smoking people have only glamourised smoking."

Space frontier pushed back

BY NIGEL HAWKES

SCIENCE EDITOR

AMERICAN astronomers have discovered the most distant galaxy yet, some 14 billion light years from the Earth.

Its huge distance means that it must have formed very early in the history of the universe, perhaps no more than a billion years after the Big Bang. The discovery was made by astronomers from the California Institute of Technology, using the world's largest optical telescope in Hawaii. Dr Thomas Barlow,

one of the team responsible, says that the galaxy was found when the astronomers were observing an even more distant object, a quasar.

What the astronomers see, he says, is "the shadow of the galaxy in the spectrum of the quasar". The observations, reported in *Astrophysical Research Letters*, enable the galaxy to be dated by measuring its red shift — the amount by which its light is shifted towards the red end of the spectrum. Dr Barlow said: "This is essentially the highest red-shift galaxy that we've

detected, which means it's the closest to the beginning of the universe".

The newly discovered galaxy has some similarities to more recent galaxies, including the Milky Way. But the galaxy has quantities of carbon, oxygen, silicon, aluminium and iron only one half to 1 per cent of those in the Milky Way. This confirms that the light we are seeing came from the galaxy when it was very young, and had not had time for the stars it contains to generate heavier elements.



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Small body, big voice, big heart

THE
VALERIE
GROVE
INTERVIEW



Thomas Quasthoff is a world-class singer first — and a thalidomide victim second

The most remarkable thing about Thomas Quasthoff is his voice. Not just his singing voice, but his speaking voice, which is rich and deep, punctuated with bursts of stentorian laughter that seem fantastically vigorous coming from one so small.

Wednesday night's applause, at the end of his London debut recital at the Wigmore Hall, was tumultuous. As he walked on stage and began to sing Schubert's *Ganymed*, tears started in many eyes. He gave us Prometheus, the Erl-King, the Dwarf. His choice of songs — especially sardonic, perhaps, was Goethe's *Grenzen der Menschheit* ("Man's Limitations"): "For no mortal shall measure himself against the gods" — affected the audience deeply, and set them pondering on the courageous spirit of a singer who has overcome the most daunting of limitations.

Quasthoff was born near Hanover in 1959. His mother had taken thalidomide (the drug prescribed to combat morning sickness in pregnancy, which resulted in terrible growth defects in otherwise perfectly healthy babies) and Thomas was an early victim. "A pioneer," he says with a burst of laughter, "a nice word for a bad fact." His tiny hands grow straight from his shoulders. His legs are dwarfishly short. But his lungs are strong,



Thomas Quasthoff couldn't study at a music college because the rules insisted that students of singing must also play an instrument, and there were no concessions for a boy without arms

his face is handsome, his mind razor-sharp, he is the most wholeheartedly enthusiastic man you could meet and, of course, he has this extraordinary voice.

Nobody could spend a lifetime dwelling on misfortune and he is quick to dismiss the subject — after a brief passing reference to the powerful pharmaceutical industry that allowed a drug to be marketed even after it was suspected of causing disability. "That is what you call capitalism I think. Heh heh!" He has to live with "the fact" every day. So he

is thankful for his voice, and for loving parents who encouraged him.

He started as a boy soprano in a choir at 14. There was constant music at home: piano, saxophone, clarinet; he grew up hearing Mozart and Bach, his elder brother's Jethro Tull records, his own collection of jazz. He wanted to study at a music college, but the rules insisted that students of singing must also play a musical instrument. No special concession could be made for a boy without arms. Instead, he read law at univer-

sity, and later worked in broadcasting.

But he never gave up singing: he took private lessons, and is glad of it. "I have had time to develop my voice in quiet, and not be influenced by the intrigues of the music high school. Others study for three or four years, then go in large opera houses and have to sing parts that are much too difficult for their voice, and their careers are often very short."

He owes his technique to a brilliant voice teacher, Charlotte Lehmann. "And I think my way of singing is very

influenced by my own life, my own feelings, troubles, happinesses. At 36 I am intelligent enough to know what is important and what is not."

The turning point in his life was 1988, when he won first prize in the ARD International Music Competition in Munich. "I ask myself, do I win this competition because I am talented? Or do I have a bonus for my disability? But I think my life since then is a confirmation of the jury's decision. Sometimes a person wins a competition and after a few years, nobody remembers the name."

His hands flutter expressively as he talks. "I am able, really I am ABLE to enjoy. And that makes my life very rich. I am a very gifted person. Blessed, I mean."

One blessing is his gregariousness. "If you are not in a good relationship with nature, and with other people, if you are not positive and able to love, then you will never be a good artist, never. It is a

symbolism. If you are an unfriendly, ignoring person, don't be a singer. If you are cold, you have a cold voice."

The warmth of his personality captivated the English Chamber Orchestra, with whom he did a Mediterranean music cruise last summer. I am told Quasthoff flung himself into shipboard life — swimming, drinking, playing table tennis. And after the Wigmore concert, in the green room, friends lunged themselves down on the floor to hug and kiss him.

"The first time I come into the concert hall, I know people think, 'Oh my God, this disability, oh my God.' But that is completely over when I start to sing. And then, it is not just that they say 'There is such power in his voice' — there must be something else that I

cannot describe. The audience must think: 'Something happens. It is for the audience to say what it is.'

He believes that conquering disability must have given him an added sensitivity. "Because it's work to accept disability, and it's not a work that ever finishes. At the moment I have a normal life. I am a successful person, I am very independent, and I get the gift to be loved, the biggest present you can get, bigger than the most successful concert."

The next opportunity we have to hear him is on March 12 at the Barbican, in the presence of the Prince of Wales, when he will sing Mozart with the English Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Piersas Zukerman. He will also sing Britten's *War Requiem* in Edinburgh this

August. He is hotly in demand, booked to work, via Sir Simon Rattle and Sir Colin Davis later this year.

"Our professional life is not always easy. I love my job but I don't love the business. If I only work with music I have the most beautiful profession in the world, but the bad fact is that agents want money — not in my case, Tania Collette is not only a wonderful agent but a good critic — but some agents think not about the singer but only that he is good for the agency."

"I don't want to get famous. I want to work better. I want to work with good conductors, I never want to be a slave of my music life. My private life, my private love, is as important. I don't want to sing 120 concerts a year and ask myself when I am 53, where did my life go?"

"I am in the world to read, walk, smell, listen, enjoy nature, sit down with the singing of birds and the atmosphere of flowers," (he has a horror of polluted, traffic-clogged cities) "enjoy being with friends, and going to the theatre, and being alone with books, or being together with my girlfriend."

"Sitting with the person you love in the same room, exchanging no words, looking each other in the eyes. The home of my girlfriend is so beautiful to see. How she has arranged the room, so beautiful with old wood, and nice things..." He stops himself. "But that is my private life and it is only mine."

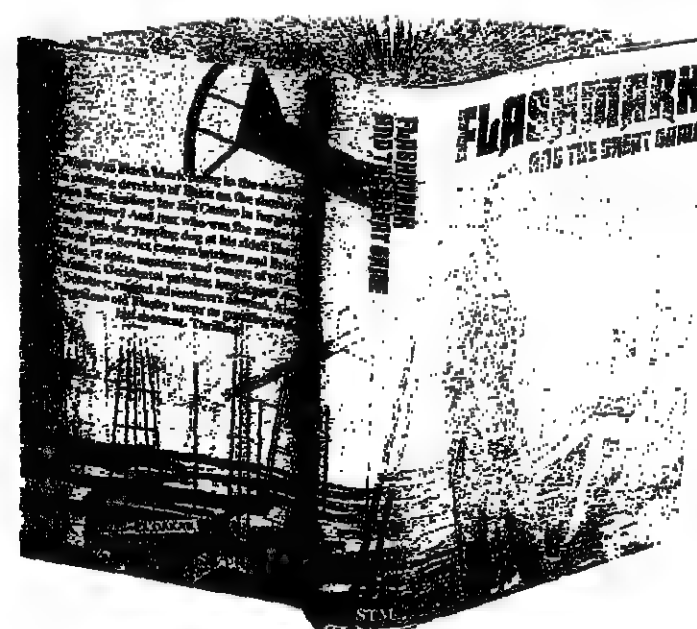
But, he adds, a beautiful room can give peace and pleasure. "A room like this one" (we are in the house of Charles Spencer, the accompanist, who has tastefully converted his Victorian house in Kensington) "reminds you there is so much to enjoy in life, literature, theatre. When I am finished singing I will definitely be a rich person, not in money so much, but I am so interested in everything. I am a man who will never in my life sit down in front of the television and say 'Well, Oh God, let's have a look what's on the other programme'..."

He calls himself a severe critic of other singers. "I am not able to sing every concert in the world for baritone or bass baritone. So I am happy that there are plenty of very good, very beautiful other voices. In Tokyo we had to have a new soprano at the last minute, and when Dorothea Roschmann began to sing at the rehearsal, she was so absolutely brilliant and beautiful it made me cry."

"As I get older, I think somebody up there has a very helping hand to influence my life. Not only in concerts but in my private life I feel that what we call God is very near. Because I've got many presents in my life. I'm thankful every day."

THE SUNDAY TIMES

MARK THATCHER SPIES HIS CHANCE



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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

In the shadow of the stalker

Dr Raj Persaud reports on a frightening and violent obsession

With the Home Office considering new measures to deter stalkers, and the police hunting a stalker who raped a woman while she was under their protection, the need to understand this obsessive behaviour is urgent. In 25 per cent of cases stalkers eventually assault their victims.

Although the fan pursuing a celebrity usually grabs the headlines, in half the cases the stalker has had some kind of prior relationship with the victim that has turned sour. Last year two American clinical psychologists, Dr Reid Meloy and Dr Shayna Gothard, published extensive research into the characteristics of stalkers. The vast majority are men, with an average age of 35; most are unemployed, and 60 per cent have had previous psychiatric treatment.

However, compared with other mentally disordered offenders they are usually better educated and of at least average intelligence — 25 per cent were above-average. Their resourcefulness explains the frequent inability of victims to elude capture.

Meloy and Gothard uncovered chilling cases in which one stalker posed as a police officer to obtain an address from a motor records department, while another decoded unlisted phone numbers of his victim whenever she changed them by using telephone installation equipment. If they are so smart, however, why do they ignore their



How often do stalkers physically assault their quarry?

victim's furious and fearful rejections? They are socially isolated: only one in seven stalkers is married, many have never had a close relationship. Extremely sensitive to personal rejection, their anger at a rebuff often provokes the pursuit, and may provide a defence against loneliness.

But what about the cases where victim and stalker have never met at all? Many adolescents go through a brief stage of obsessive following when they pursue pop stars they have never met.

Irrational infatuation of this kind is usually both harmless and temporary; but psychiatrists are aware that a small group pursue those they idolise with an intensity which reflects a disturbed rationality rather than simple admiration. Some of these suffer from erotomania, a sudden conviction that an older person of high social status is in love with them.

The pressing issue for police is to assess which stalkers are likely to be violent. Meloy and Gothard found that the best predictor of a stalker attacking his quarry is a previous history of

violence, as well as drug or alcohol abuse.

Dr Robert Menzies and colleagues at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada

have found that if a stalker has delusions about just one person he is likely to be relatively harmless, but if he has delusions about many it strongly predicts violence.

However, the violence is not usually directed at an object of desire, but often those perceived to be standing in the way of the consummation of the relationship. A public figure's partner is particularly vulnerable to violent attack from stalkers of this kind.

The powerful emotional needs which underlie stalking explain why the pursuers themselves often have a paradoxical sense of being controlled by their victim, and even claim they were the one trying to end the relationship.

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Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* has made heroin chic. Giles Coren discovers the depressing reality

Why drug addiction is not a style issue



Reformed heroin addict Eamon Doherty acted as a technical adviser on the film

February 23 sees the opening of *Trainspotting*. The film, based on Irvine Welsh's 1993 cult novel, and made by the same team as last year's hippest film, *Shallow Grave*, follows a group of friends through the highs and lows of heroin addiction.

It involves violence, death and the betrayal of friends. So far, so standard. The difference with this film is that while it highlights the pain of heroin addiction, it also makes no attempt to hide the pleasure. And for that reason it is certain to cause controversy.

Already, it has resulted in heroin addiction becoming a style issue. In the magazines considered essential reading among those who think themselves young and hip, there is an uncomfortable element of "heroin chic". In this week's edition of *The Face*, for example, the star of the film, Ewan McGregor, is pictured in wasted fashion, with his physical appearance as an addict described as follows: "To accurately portray junkie and Pot Noodle boy Mark Renton, McGregor has lost nearly two stone and shaved his head. He looks shit and looks great." It is hip, in other words, to be hooked. The piece is called "Hey hey it's the junkies".

On another page, an article about the soundtrack to the film — which is expected to be a huge seller in its own right — is headlined "Smacksonic".

And yet *Time Out* puts McGregor on its front cover, handsome and haunted, with the words, "Take the best orgasm you ever had. Multiply it by a thousand. You're still nowhere near it". Yes, they are lines from the book, but the book surrounds them with 300 pages of grim reality. *Time Out* exploits only the sex appeal. Irvine Welsh never meant for this. And nor, one assumes, did the film-makers.

Honesty, they insist, was a primary concern. Their quest for verisimilitude took them to Glasgow, although the book is set in Edinburgh, because the drug scene there is closer to the way the Scottish capital was in the mid-1980s, when the story is set.

They even used a technical adviser, reformed addict Eamon Doherty, a counsellor at Glasgow's Calton Athletic rehabilitation project. His story is anything but chic.

He was a heroin addict for seven years; his brother died of an overdose last April.

"He started when he was 15, about a year before me," says Eamon, who speaks with evangelical enthusiasm. "He would have been 33 now, but he knew what he was doing. It's no use complaining. I got into it myself through other drugs I had been doing since I was 12 or 13. I thought it was great at first, when I had the money. And then I started on selling drugs, and stealing from my family, and my standards went the same way as my stereo and all my other possessions."

Then I had a collapse just before my 18th birthday, and spent nine weeks in hospital with septicaemia. They had a priest in to give me the last rites. And when I recovered, I was back on it as soon as I got out. After that it was no fun anymore. I was just doing it to get normal. It was seven years before I stopped."

On the film set Eamon supervised the injection scenes — into prosthetic arms — and helped the actors to tune their physical reactions to the drug. "The film was so realistic it was frightening," says 24-year-old Darny Jackson, another former addict. "It took me right back to the days when I was on it. All of us from the club who saw it felt the same. The first feelings were that good, the reality of it was that bad."

Eamon says: "If I was making the film, I would end with rehabilitation. But then no one would go and see it, would they? Nobody wants to go and see a man sitting in his room talking about his problems. When I spoke to *The Face* I had no idea they would do this. They've tried to write down my accent. It's all 'oh aye the noo' as if I was thick or something."

"They might think Ewan McGregor looks good," he says, "but in truth if he was really an addict he'd be physically, mentally and spiritually dead. You don't eat or wash. Your whole body breaks down — 82 per cent of jagers [addicts who inject] here have

Ewen Bremner as Spud and Ewan McGregor as Mark Renton in *Trainspotting*

hepatitis C, and they say only 1 per cent are HIV positive. Well, they are transmitted in the same way, and HIV has been around longer. So you can work it out for yourself."

The mood at the rehabilitation project is upbeat, but the stories are dismal. David Main, 24, played football for Celtic under-10s and the Scottish youth team. Then he started on the drugs, missed a trial for the Celtic senior team, and it was all over. He is the same age as Ryan Giggs.

If their stories are sad, his are sadder still. He is the son of those still dependent on heroin. An hour or so before addict Joey passed out, he had been selling copies of the *Big Issue* at Glasgow Central Station. Like 90 per cent of Glasgow's vendors, he sells the magazine to pay for his addiction.

From the station he walked to Possil to buy his Dan Mac ("Dan Mac, man. Smack"). He had looked drawn and hollow at the station, a dozen miserably hard years older than his

31. We talk in a tenement block, where the windows are not glass but sheet steel. "Welcome to the real world," Joey says. "This is the badlands. I love it here. Dodging the bandits and all. That's what it's all about."

"But I've got my kit. And nobody can take it off me. I've got 43 stitches here in my face. 30 on the outside, 13 on the in. They gave it to me two months ago, but they didn't get my kit. And they didn't get it when they used a machete, or when they stabbed me here [he shows the scar in his back], or here [under his rib cage], or here [in his abdomen]. I'm only nine stone, and I'm sick. But no one has ever got my stash," Joey says.

He dives into the washbag he carries with him everywhere and pulls out a medical swab. "They give you these at the needle exchange to clean your arm with before you inject, but we don't use them for that."

They're full of alcohol, so they burn great for cooking up your kit. I couldn't bang it in my arms. I can't use them for another six months, because I've got no veins left there. And you've got to be careful to hit a vein. Sometimes you think you've hit one, when you haven't, and the next day it swells up like a golf ball. But I cut out all my own abscesses with a knife, I don't bother with doctors." He shows off the abscess scars on his legs, and no one would mistake them for the work of a doctor.

"It was about 1980 when I started jaggling. I was living with my ma and da but most of the time I was in this house with a lot of 25 to 35-year-olds. They were always well out of it, and didn't interest me too much. And then someone said 'Give the wee man a bit'. They put a tie round my arm, and I looked away while they gave me a £2 bit. I was telling them to hurry up and get it over with, and they said 'it's done'. Next thing I came round and I was shitting this 35-year-old

bird. I thought 'this is it', and next night I was round there asking where to get more."

"I was still at school at the time, and soon everyone was doing it, that's how it was then. I worked as a roofer for a time, but when things got really bad I couldn't do that anymore," Joey says.

"So I started stealing. I never rob from my own kind, never from the poor. I go up to Bearsden and King's Park and rob the TV people and the footballers. I'm a regular in the prisons. My last stretch was 18 months, but it's not so bad."

"The kit's easier to get inside than it is outside. Your lumber comes in and you kiss her, she passes it into your mouth, you swallow, and next morning you take it out. And when the book came out and we heard it was about jaggling, everyone wanted it. There was a copy on my landing, and it was five months before I got a read."

Joey adds: "It's brilliant. Being an addict is just like it says in the book. I'll never get off it now. My sister died of it two years ago, but my younger sister is 21 and has never smoked a joint. I'm so proud of her, because smack is back now in a bad way."

"For a while the kids were just E-ing, but now they do heroin to come down off the Ecstasy, and it's in all the clubs. They start smoking it, and they think they're not junkies. But when their tolerance gets up, they jag. And that's it. They'll all end like me. It's a sad existence, but I'm not looking for pity. I know what I'm doing. I'm too far gone for that. I'm a lost cause."

He went back to the station, and began his selling again. Another six or seven hours, another £25, another quartergram. That is how life is for him, a cycle of scrumming and injecting, or the horrors of withdrawal. There is nothing else left.

This, according to *The Face*, is "shit and great".

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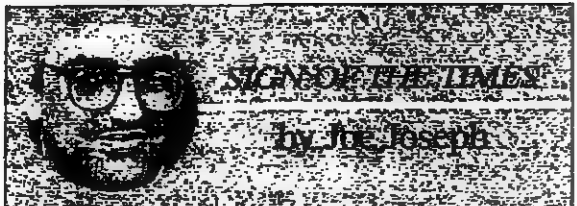
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EVEN THAT clever cookie Wittgenstein never solved the eternal riddle that keeps philosophers awake at night: why do children have to have parents?

Or, to put it in technical philosophical jargon: why do some poor kids have to have plankers for parents who dress them in Timberland shoes, Calvin Klein jeans and Ralph Lauren shirts before taking them off for lunch on Saturdays to a Covent Garden restaurant that isn't designed for two-year-olds?

Few two-year-olds are ready for sophistication. To a two-year-old, grissini are just rusks for the overbred, fried calamari tastes like Chicken McNuggets that have gone off, and fish fingers are a godsend. If God wanted two-year-olds to eat goujons of sole, he would have made all children French.

In France, or Italy, or China you see restaurant tables thronged with lunchers spanning three generations, with grandpa sitting calmly next to his grandson. But in England, when certain parents take their children to posh restaurants, it's as if they have stepped through Alice's looking-glass into a topsyturvy world where children call the shots. Attention, chairs, cutlery, eyes, everything focuses on the child. Like solicitous courtiers re-



laying the child-king's wishes to the world, parents quiz the child about his desires.

"He wants a Coke," they then bark at the waiter, but double-check just in case. "A Coke? You sure? What about apple juice instead, popper?"

YOU CAN always tell if these parents are with their first child, because they will ask the waitress to press the chef for a list of all ingredients, in every dish, for fear of polluting their child's body with preservatives or Enurbers.

These are the same parents who, on long plane journeys, lull their babies to sleep by humming African tribal lullabies that someone in their antenatal class told them was the holistically correct way of soothing their baby to sleep.

By the time their third child comes along, even a Malteser-flavoured pizza that has been on the floor more times than Frank Bruno is regarded as highly nutritious, while an aeroplane the baby is stuffed with high-dosage sleeping

potions the minute the "Fasten Seatbelt" sign goes on.

It's true that children are not the only ones who behave boorishly and prattle all day. MPs do it, and we even pay them to. And of course, there are many restaurant-friendly children who will yelp and hurl linguistic only in certain emergency situations, such as (a) if they're hungry or (b) if they're thirsty.

Another problem with child lunchers is that they can't distinguish between "laughing at" and "laughing with", which is irritating when you want to make a specific point of laughing at them in what you regard as a superior, adult sort of way. Also, kids never have any spicy gossip.

But many adults don't mind such company. They look at a rich, spoilt child squawking "I prefer the chips at Le Caprice", and all they see is someone who is probably easy to fleece at poker. But don't count on junior's generosity. However big a kid's trust fund, somehow he never picks up the lunch tab.

Philip Howard



■ The critics hate the stage version of *Les Enfants du Paradis* — I'll be there

Despite the rude press, I must go to see *Les Enfants du Paradis* on stage. Usually when the critics sink off to the pub during the last act, their excuse to the paying customers they are forcing to stand up for their exert is that they have to catch the early editions. But at the first night of *Les Enfants*, there was a stampede from the Barbican at the long-anticipated interval. And as they fled, the critics sprayed their most patronising insults and I-told-you-so's, and made excuses as feeble as having to make sure that the babysitter knew how to work the television zipper.

So one (perverse) reason for going to *Les Enfants* in the flesh is to see whether any play can be as bad as the critics allege. Usually the Royal Shakespeare Company can turn even such second-division plays as *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Peter Pan* to gold. The company is always interesting, as is Simon Callow. Another reason is that *Les Enfants* really is one of the best movies ever made, even though everyone says that it is. So the stage version got a passing for *les-majesté* from all who would put it in their top ten for solitary viewing on a desert island. For those who play this game, *Bicycle Thieves* is, of course, For the western, shall it be *High Noon* or *The Unforgiven*? For the Marxists, *Duck Soup* beats *A Night at the Opera* by a short pun. And for the classical-spectacular wild-card choice, *Spartacus* or *Clash of the Titans*? In the modern section, *Strictly Ballroom* or *Babette's Feast*?

Not even the oldest film reviewer can have seen even a twentieth of the films made this century. We amateurs, who talk about the cinema more than we go, are limited in our desert-island choices by the few films we have seen, and by our circumstances at the time — of sitting in the crowded dark so wrapped up that we wore our trousers on the seat in front. And for me, *Les Enfants* always comes top. Partly because it has the joy of coming liberation at the end of the war, like that other top ten film, Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*. For the first night of *Les Enfants*, Arletty was in prison as a collaborator for having had a love affair with a Luftwaffe pilot. When reproached, she made the enigmatic reply: "My face belongs to the world, but the rest of me is my own."

But the most interesting reason for getting bottom-cramp at the Barbican is because *Les Enfants* reverses the usual artistic progression. The luvvies are running backwards, uphill. The Darwinian evolution (or devolution) in the media is: first the book, then the stage play and then the screenplay.

The novel works through words and the reader's imagination. The stage play works through words and the actor's art. The film works through images and the director's eye. "Don't come too close, you'll see through my talent," as John Gielgud said to the lighting cameraman on the set of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The progression used to be, book, play, film — for example from Henry James's *Washington Square* to *The Heiress* in three quantum hops.

It is no surprise that the only art medium perfected by the 20th century has reversed the process. Penguin now publishes the book of the film, and it goes to the top of the bestseller lists. *Sunset Boulevard* and *Grease* may not be your fute of champagne, but both soupy offspring of the movies are pecking them in. Stage musicals are being made on the backs of *Animal Crackers* and *La Dolce Vita*, which will test the scriptwriter, for the words are made irrelevant by the pictures. In fact the screenplay is far better for *Les Enfants* than for most films, because it was written by a proper writer, Jacques Prévert. *Paris est tout petit pour ceux qui savent* comes nous d'un si grand amour. The wild romance of "It's so simple, love." And the actor-laddy Lemaître demonstrating why Shakespeare does not go in French: *De l'économie, Horace, de l'économie* misses the tug-of-war of Old Norse monosyllabic with Romance tetrasyllabic of "Thrift." Horatio, thrift. I expect *Les Enfants* is better than the rattle-snakes' rattle. And anyway I must see whether Baptiste finds Garance in the carnival crowds at the end. Of course he does.



EARLY BLAIR
(After Bacon)



LATE BLAIR

More socialist than thou

Pig-headed though he may be, there is a quixotic grandeur about Arthur Scargill and his absurd new party

It is difficult to believe that it was only nine months ago that the great fight over Clause Four was won and lost. Indeed, some of my readers today will be at a loss to understand what the words mean, and many others, when asked what it was all about, would mutter something about Tony Blair and his followers, and leave it at that. And yet it is no exaggeration to say that if the Clause Four battle had been lost, so would have been the chances of a Labour government. Some clause, eh? Let's hear it just once again. It was:

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.

And that might have scuppered the Labour Party? Well, try a dip in the headlines: "Clause Four is consigned to dustbin of history." "Triumph of Blair." "Blair hails day of destiny."

Or, on the other side of the road, Arthur Scargill denouncing every word Blair seeks: "Following in the footsteps of failure." "Scargill calls for general strike." "Arthur Scargill relates the 'new realism' of the Labour leadership directly to the betrayals of the General Strike and the class collaboration of the 1920s."

Er... the 1920s, with or without betrayals, class collaboration and even a General Strike, were roughly three-quarters of a century ago. Surely Arthur Scargill has caught up this far?

No, he hasn't. But that is the great thing about Arthur, and the thing I greatly admire, and the thing I am now going to praise. The praise cannot be undiluted: he has made dreadful mistakes, but take out the darkness, the folly, the waste of words and actions, the quagmires that he has repeatedly led his followers into and there is yet a grandeur even in his absurdities and pig-headedness. You can see that grandeur very clearly if you put Benin beside Scargill. These men were both entirely on the same side at the same time and in the same way, yet one stirs the waters every time he speaks, while the other tries to make a figure. (My eye just then fell upon a tiny cutting: "Arthur Scargill was hissed and slow-

handclapped. Tony Benn sat sullen and silent, surrounded by political enemies.")

And now — the greatest folly imaginable, yet heroic at the same time — Arthur has founded a new party. The Socialist Labour Party it is called, and good luck to it, a great deal of which he will need. Never mind that new parties, in our system, can never thrive unless over decades; never mind that he has now no following to speak of; never mind that he has been thrown out of the real Labour Party (which, I suppose, he will call the fraudulent Labour Party, while no doubt also calling Tony Blair a fraudulent Labour Party leader); never mind that he will become a figure of laughter — never mind all of this and more, Arthur Scargill will not be defeated.

It is a remarkable story, is it not? Consider: when Ted Heath faced up to the miners, he was beaten good and proper, but pretended that he wasn't. When Margaret Thatcher fought them and beat them, it was the end not only for Scargill but for the whole world of coalmining.

But Arthur put his telescope to his blind eye, and — this is the most remarkable part of the story — most of his dwindling band was led by Arthur into quicksands and never seen again, though the dwindling band could see what was happening. Is that not a remarkable essay in loyalty? And doesn't it make Arthur much more heroic, as well as much more daft?

For not only has Arthur established a new party, he is trying it out. I am writing on the eve of a by-election; the election was necessary because of the death of Derek Enright, who had held the seat for many years. It is indeed one of the most solid seats in the country; at the last election, Derek Enright had a majority of 22,000, and the successor, Jon Trickett, can hardly fear his Tory

enemy, who polled fewer than 8,000 votes. But if the Tories are unlikely to dent the Labour armour, what chance has Arthur Scargill?

True, Arthur has not taken the plunge himself: one of his cohorts is standing in for Arthur. The Arthurian candidate is a lady, Brenda Nixon, who fights under the banner of Women Against Pit Closures — hardly a clarion to make the voters come running. She has other problems: there are a dozen or so other candidates, including the National Democrat candidate, the Green candidate, the UK Independence candidate, the Natural Law candidate, the Lib-Dem, the Mark Thomas Friday Nights Channel 4 candidate, and of course our dear old friend, the Lord Sutch Official Monster Raving Loony candidate.

Oh, and I nearly forgot: the Tory candidate.

Now, what chance has Brenda Nixon to carry off the prize? Yet there she goes, with her campaigners in hopes of carrying off the prize. And she is going into the fight with banners fluttering — what does that say about Arthur Scargill?

Well, one thing it says about Arthur Scargill is that he lives in the past, but knows that the past has gone by. When he is jeered at, and he now gets more jeers than cheers, he says: "They were the same words used against Keir Hardie in 1888 when he first stood as an independent socialist. Now everyone wants to claim Keir Hardie as their own. People should learn a bit of their history." Yes, they should. But the tiny remark I have quoted — "They were the same words used against Keir Hardie in 1888..." also contained a few more words, which I left out: "...one of the founding fathers of the Labour Party..." For, you see, most

people today do not know who Keir Hardie is.

You and I would think that coalmining was a trade no human being should be obliged to take; indeed, I remember an article I wrote which finished with a prayer that it would be eliminated for ever very soon. Not so the miners; incredibly, he loved his trade, not least because of the tightly-knit communities. Then my prayer was answered, to the dismay of the miners. What does a superannuated coalminer do? Embroider pillow-cases? Draw the dote?

Even Arthur Scargill could not stop the blood-letting as more and more pits were closed; but at least he could denounce his enemies — those enemies who had given in and let Clause Four go. Now he is very close to making himself a fool: his new party will get a handful of votes — about the same number as Lord Sutch — and his new "party" will wither on the vine. What, I wonder, does he feel, or indeed say, about the pit which was taken over by a group of superannuated miners (nobody wanted it, who worked their butts off and not only made it the last pit in their area, but made a handsome profit too)? Arthur speaks:

I feel a free man, like I've been let out of jail. There's a sense of relief. I feel almost exuberant, as if I'm campaigning for a new party. We are all singing from the same socialist hymn-sheet — and were not worried about offending the spin-doctors!

But Arthur must know, even as he hides the truth from himself (he cannot hide it from others) that the very best he can hope for with his absurd Socialist Labour Party is a couple of deposits held, and even that is very unlikely.

Go back to the fight over Clause Four: if the man in the moon trained his telescope on the proceedings, he would be entirely nonplussed. He would see several camps, all on the same side of the battle, but with half of them fighting the other half. I dare not ask Arthur point-blank whether it is better to have a milkop Labour government or another Tory government; I say that I dare not ask him, not because he would hit me on the head with a rolling-pin, but because I fear he would say "Yes, it is better to have the Tories in again, than to change even one word — nay, one syllable — of Clause Four". And do you know what Mrs Brenda Nixon, the candidate for the SLP, says of the head of the Labour Party? She says, "I haven't an ounce of respect for Tony Blair."

It ain't cricket, cobber

Simon Barnes

toasts the whingeing Aussies

This is a one of those moments for feeling grateful to Australians. As the grim news of the bombings in Sri Lanka tempts us to despair, so the Australian cricketers cheer us with a comic sub-plot. This is nothing less than Shakespearean: the drunken porter, the gravediggers, the Australian cricketers. The single-mindedness with which each set of characters follows its own course, unaware of the priorities of a greater world, grants a welcome moment of relief to us all.

In Colombo, the death toll is horrific, the number of the wounded beyond easy comprehension, but the Aussies respond: what about our cricketers? The Australian Cricket Board goes into a huddle early next week for a good old grumble. They are considering forfeiting their World Cup match in Sri Lanka, which should take place on February 17. That would mean donating the points to the opposition, and it's the sort of idea they want well ventilated; because they want the world to know that, well, it just isn't right. Compare and contrast with the Zimbabwean team manager, Denis Streak, on hearing the news of the bombings. Asked if his team would now consider withdrawing, he said: "We've thought about it. But we come from a country that knows about war and we're not going to worry about a few bombs."

The Australians reject any such blithe acceptance of life's turbulence. Life, after all, shouldn't be like it was in Colombo yesterday. How many times have I heard an Australian explain "It's not fffffffh"? This search for the Protean quality of fairness is something of a national characteristic, but in sport the gold of fairness becomes transmuted, by a sort of reverse alchemy, into the base metal of whingeing.

I was the Australians who first called the settlers from England whingeing Poms. It became accepted myth that Poms always complained and seldom washed. How can you tell that a 747 landing at Sydney is from London? It carries on winning after the jets have been switched off. But this eternal complaint about the Poms is itself a kind of whinge. And when one turns to sport and sees coherent thought aside, the scope for whingeing is unending — and Australians, it must be said, are masters.

Their cricketers are up to their necks in a scandal, with Pakistan, in which they allege that Salim Malik, then Pakistan captain, tried to bribe them to lose a Test match. The Aussies now face death threats on their return to Pakistan.

Long before the Sri Lankan bombing, the Australian board said that any player who felt he would be in danger at the World Cup, which will be held all over the sub-continent, was free to withdraw without penalty.

Death threats, however, occupy the Australian mind: only when they tear themselves away from the awkward right arm of Muttiah Muralitharan, Australian umpires believe that this Sri Lankan slow bowler gives extra zest to his leg-break by throwing the ball — which is illegal, of course. Yet legal or not, Muralitharan is hardly the world's most ferocious bowler. Bringing the might of cricket law to bear on the rather hapless young fellow is a sledgehammer and nut situation. But it's not fffffffh, you see.

Meanwhile, David Carapese, the Australian rugby player — a man touched by greatness — has been whingeing on about the England rugby team again. "English players can't make decisions when the pressure's on. Rob Andrew has gone, but nothing has changed." This crosses the boundary from rival-baiting to whingeing, especially when you recall that the last time England played Australia at rugby union, it was the quarter-final of the World Cup and England won — thanks to a last-minute drop goal from Rob Andrew.

Australian whingeing is an ancient tradition. The longest whinge in sporting history goes back to 1932-33, when Douglas Jardine captained England in Australia at cricket in what will be remembered forever as the Bodyline series. Today, even the most fastidious would not object to the bowling. Only two batsmen were injured in the entire series: that can happen in one day in a modern game.

But physical assault was not the real issue. The issue was planning, and the plan's accurate, professional execution, England's greatest weapon, the genius of Don Bradman. It was not the bowling of Harold Larwood that was vicious: it was the thinking of Jardine.

This signalled the end of sport as the world then knew it. Sport was no longer fun: not at the highest level. It was instead a fierce and terrible drama which stripped bare the nature of its participants. It destroyed some and gave others impossible glory. Sport became the most brutal examination of character.

Modern sport is often enthralling, often profoundly satisfying. But it is seldom much fun: not for the participants, anyway. It matters too much for that. So perhaps the Aussies were right to whinge — are right to carry on whingeing.

True whingeing is nostalgia for a world that never existed: a world when everything was fun and everything was fair. In every complaint, from the Colombo *cri de coeur* to the Carapese rant-a-whinge, there is a yearning for a better world. Life shouldn't be like this, it's not fffffffh. And in the end, there is a kind of nobility in it.

Poor John

A SENSITIVE chap, John Major. The latest spate of poisonous stories about a new chasm between himself and his Chancellor has jangled a raw nerve.

On Wednesday, he invited a dozen MPs to lunch at Downing Street — trusted souls, mostly although there were one or two licensed dissenters. And without a by-your-leave, he burst into a torrent of denial. He insisted that he and Kenneth Clarke stood four-square together (Winnie-the-Pooh and Piglet come to mind) over Europe and the economy.

"It was extraordinary," says one of the hunchers. "Nobody was even suggesting there was anything in the stories. He just came out with it, got it off his chest."

The assembled audience clucked and nodded sagely as they listened to his bafflement and surprise at the appalling suggestions of a rift. But as they left they were in broad agreement — the PM doth protest too much.

● The Princess of Wales is still discussing the Queen's letter urging her to divorce. Perhaps she is stalling until after a two-day conference at the Park Lane Hotel next month before making a

decision. One of the organisers is her solicitor, Mishcon de Rey. And the subject? "Big Money and International Divorce".

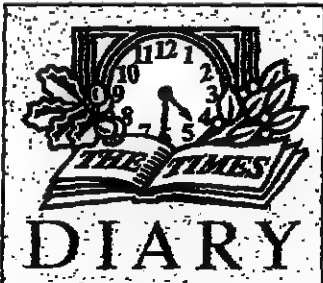
Longueurs

THE GUEST of honour at the opening night of Simon Callow's interminable new play, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, was Patricia Quinn. Callow has dedicated the work to her late husband, Sir Robert Stephens.

"It was extraordinary," says one of the hunchers. "Nobody was even suggesting there was anything in the stories. He just came out with it, got it off his chest."

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Though delighted by the dedication, this put her in a tricky position — she had to sit through the entire four-hour work. "It's a very difficult play to stage," she says with tact. "There are 60 scenes in it. The real trouble is that it's a film, not a play."

Adrian Noble, the RSC's artistic director, admitted yesterday that Callow "could perhaps have cut it a bit more"; and even the star turn in the play, Joseph Fiennes (brother of Ralph), said the length of the play made for difficulties. "I think he could have been a bit more ruthless," he said. "It's a bit of a problem, the logistics of getting home after the show."

Vic and Bert

THE LATEST venue for romantic encounters in London is the Victoria and Albert Museum on Wed-

nesday nights. Although the museum rejects any suggestion of a "singles' night", it is encouraging lonely hearts to dally in its vaults.

The museum reports that as a result of its Friends' evenings on Wednesdays, one couple are married and many others are courting. Now it has opened up evening romance to the general public.

Last Wednesday night, the place hummed with young bucks. Advertisements proclaiming the romantic potential have been running in the personal columns of *Time Out*, the London listings magazine. And a Valentine's Day seminar on kissing in art will add to the atmosphere. "It's a friendly atmosphere and people feel encouraged to talk to each other," explains the museum.

Heart attack

LADY ROMSEY, the elegant wife of Earl Mountbatten's grandson now identified as the "horsey" voice whinnying away for 17 minutes to the Duke of Edinburgh on his mobile phone, has a less than traditional taste in jewellery.

Her title and her fine hairband have not prevented her from acquiring the kind of personalised pendant which even Gerald Ranner might balk at. On a chain around her neck nestles a heart with the letters of her name. Pen-



Penny: cheap at the price

ny, picked out on it — the female equivalent of a gold medallion on a hairy chest.

The former Penny Eastwood was briefly linked romantically to Prince Charles in 1975, and he is known to have a penchant for

jewellery incorporating names. Mary Spillane, the image expert from Colour Me Beautiful, is astonished: "It's a very adolescent thing to wear."

● The Duke of Edinburgh is not the only person to have had trouble with his mobile phone. In a written answer to Hansard, Robin Squire, the junior Minister for Education and Employment, said that ministers had twice had mobile phones "cloned" by fraudsters. And each time the phone in question belonged to Robin Squire.

High pitch

THE BEAUTIFUL shrine of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been visited by many eminent Roman Catholics, but this summer it can expect three more in the substantial and tuneful form of the three tenors — all of whom are themselves Catholics.

Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras have agreed to sing there in July to mark the 15th anniversary of the first visions of the Virgin Mary. The concert, to be transmitted across the world by satellite, will tell the story of the shrine since 1981, when six children claimed that the Virgin Mary had appeared.

P.H.S



SPANISH MALPRACTICE

A bad decision for Iberia, Spain and Europe

The EU Transport Commissioner, Neil Kinnock, was asked to rule this week on whether Spain should be allowed to break its promise to its partners and pump £440 million into its bloated national airline, Iberia. Presented with an opportunity to fight for a level runway for Europe's airlines, Mr Kinnock flinched and found excuses to let Spain bend the rules. Iberia, on its record of monumental incompetence and waste, does not deserve to survive under its present ownership. Since the Greek, Portuguese, Belgian and Irish airlines are queuing up for extra aid which they too promised they would not need, this decision is a grim precedent — as politically feeble as it is economically monstrous.

Those who defend the European Commission's "pragmatism" rest their case on two arguments: that Iberia has been given less money than it requested and on specific restrictive conditions which are held to mean that the proposed investment is identical to a private-sector decision. This is backed by another, unstated, argument which holds that the Commission, battered by recent unpopularity, should not force a high-profile nationalised company into sale or bankruptcy while every politician from Stockholm to Seville is urging action to bring down the continent's debt queues.

The Commission, which wields huge powers against monopolies and the abuse of government subsidies to private businesses, is making a grievous error. The EU treaty encourages the commissioners to balance legal, commercial and political factors in their state aid and competition decisions. But to grant most of Iberia's request is both against the treaty's spirit and against the interests of Europe's air travellers. Any prospect of lower fares fades yet further.

Nor does this week's decision in Brussels give any real help to the Iberia employees whose jobs have been "protected". Three-

and-a-half-thousand of them will lose their jobs anyway during the next two years, and the remainder will have to wait even longer for the arrival of a disciplined and competitive management which can truly secure jobs by making the airline competitive in the global market. Meanwhile, the rest of the Spanish economy suffers from the diversion of capital by the Government into a plainly inefficient enterprise.

Last year British Airways made a profit of £301 million without state subsidy; Iberia made a pre-tax loss of £269 million. According to Mr Kinnock, the principle of phasing out airline subsidies should give way to the "market investor principle". This "principle", which has put down sturdy roots in European law, allows state aid to a company if the State is behaving as a private-sector investor would. But, if the Spanish Government's investment in Iberia were a sound bet, the state holding company would not need to be making it. The private-sector market would provide investors and the Government could withdraw. Iberia is a poor investment because it is too badly run to make money for its investors.

British Airways has already begun legal action against the Commission for its supine permission to the French government to put £2.3 billion into Air France, currently losing around £50 million a month. Given the Commission's one-time determination not to waste any more money on Iberia, British Airways should have strong arguments to mount a parallel legal challenge. The Commission's collective feebleness in the face of Spanish blackmail also raises a wider point about its powers under the EU treaty. Powers to police state subsidies are among the strongest that the Commission has. Why should national governments grant it any increased powers at this year's review of the Maastricht treaty when existing powers are used in such an anti-European way?

DEGREE QUALITY

Fees may be the future, but not at a flat rate

University vice-chancellors meet today to decide if they should end Britain's tradition of free access to higher education. Support seems solid for a proposal to charge £300 as the price of a place at university. The proposal is crude but it has one merit: it focuses attention on the need for further reform in academia — to improve financing, defend standards and allow liberal learning to flourish in our finest institutions.

The flat-rate fee is a tactic adopted to bully the Government into reversing the spending constraints imposed on universities. Disappointed by a budget that cut higher education expenditure by 7 per cent, and envisaged a further 6 per cent cut in 1997-98, the vice-chancellors have counter-attacked. They hope the prospect of a hefty bill arriving at thousands of middle-class homes next September will be enough to force a government retreat.

The Government may hope that some of the vice-chancellors will prove fairhearted. Less prestigious universities may calculate that a levy will deter applicants and that any fall in admissions will mean large losses, which an extra £300 from each remaining new student will not offset. The Government may also judge that even if the vice-chancellors hang together they cannot all rely on their own governing bodies for support. As any student of C.P. Snow knows, it is a rare head of an academic institution who is truly Master in his own House. The Education Secretary may refuse to bend, knowing that it will be in the interests of some universities to break. But relying on the willingness of weaker brethren to abandon the levy will not be enough.

The current funding troubles are only the most obvious symptom of a much deeper malaise. The Government has congratulated itself on a rapid expansion of student numbers — as though academic productiv-

ity were an end in itself. But the expansion seems to have been accompanied by a decline in standards and erosion of independence.

Universities have relaxed entrance requirements in order to accept ever more students, and extra income direct from the Government. There is little incentive to be selective; thus, even though entrance numbers increase, so too does the proportion of those dropping out. Worse still, there is worrying evidence that students now face far less stringent final examinations. As numbers overall have gone up, so too have the numbers of students who secure first-class degrees. The proportion of firsts has remained constant over the last four years despite a 65 per cent increase in undergraduate numbers. It seems, at best, curious that so many vice-chancellors should reach a level once the preserve of a genuine elite.

Reversing the cuts might not make universities more choosy, simply more greedy. The most appropriate answer is matching the universities' power to select with a mechanism to make students more discriminating. Harsh Economics may determine student numbers, but Logic should not be neglected. Universities should be encouraged to contemplate top-up tuition fees, but rather than a flat rate these should reflect the quality of the qualification on offer. Of course students from poorer families should be exempt, and many institutions should survive without having to charge, but those from comfortable families should pay if they want excellence. That would remove the need for the better universities to expand needlessly and allow them to maintain their traditional methods of teaching in tutorials or seminars. Reform before the next election is unlikely, but if higher education is to combine the virtues of access and excellence, there must be open minds on entrance fees.

YOUNG MASTERS

Music comes early: painting must wait

An unknown self-portrait by Francis Bacon, painted when he was only 21, has just been found in a private collection of paintings. As Richard Cork writes on our Arts pages today, this is a significant discovery: Bacon was a fussy fellow, whose dislike of his own youthful work drove him to destroy much that he painted before his *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*.

A survivor from those massacres, the self-portrait ought to teach us a little about this tortured artist as a young man. But how much, on its own, can it teach us? As a picture, it is neither original nor attractive, but rather an awkward pastiche of the modes of its time. It has none of the "reek of human blood smiling out" — to use Bacon's own favourite line from Aeschylus — that one has come to associate with the painter's familiar oeuvre. If this self-portrait is typical of his earlier work, then the later Bacon is clearly finer art.

This should not surprise us. Painters, like most composers of music, novelists and judges, change with age. And they usually get better. Take Cézanne, a major exhibition of whose work begins next week at the Tate Gallery in London. His early work is dreary, dark and morbid, and unduly concerned with violence. As a painter he found his language only much later in life, with his technique of constricting volume out of brush

strokes. Mondrian changed too — and radically — moving with time from sweet Dutch landscapes to brightly coloured grids and rectangles.

Very occasionally, painters get worse with age. André Derain is an example. A *fauve* — and close friend of Matisse in the latter's wildest phase — he was a Young Turk who turned out to be an old bore, ending his artistic days as a Neo-Classical reactionary. Such change in individual style is most easily discerned in art's modern era: for in the days of the Renaissance a young artist was often merely a copyist in the school of a master. A painter's early style declared itself only exceptionally, such as in Leonardo's angel in the painting by Verrocchio.

Painters take longer to mature than composers of music do: and there is more to this assertion than just the example of Mozart. The Viennese prodigy may have composed seven symphonies by the time he was 10 years old — and six operas by his fifteenth year, including *Mitridate* — but there are others too, including Mendelssohn, whose genius shone earlier than that of any serious painter. Francis Bacon took some while to blossom — if that is the right word to describe paintings such as his anguished, screaming Papes. In that, he was only of his artistic type. The best painters, like their counterparts in wine, mature only with age.

Judgment on a pay rise for MPs

From Mr Norris McWhirter

Sir, Twice before MPs have voted to more than double their salaries (letters and leading article, February 1). In 1954, after a 17-year standstill, they raised their basic pay from £600 to £1,250; while in 1964, after a nine-year standstill, they gave themselves a raise to £3,250. The taxpayer now, however, is presented with the spectre of a doubling from their 1995 raise.

The electorate of taxpayers and others ultimately decide whether a parliamentary candidate receives any salary at all. It is entitled to recall how each MP has regarded his custodianship of our parliamentary, and hence national, sovereignty. We had long regarded the rule of law as dependent upon being governed by consent — i.e. rule by an administration that could be sacked.

On May 20, 1993, our MPs collectively carried the third reading of the Maastricht Bill by 292 to 112. Why, now that they have given away the above rights to overseas institutions that are unsackable, should they expect to double their remuneration? They have diminished themselves to regional, off-shore councillors in a chamber which some of them plan will take on the ambience of a museum.

If there were any logic or justice, unless they have a change of heart and of spirit, they ought, as in the national crisis of 1931, to vote themselves a pay cut.

Yours faithfully,
NORRIS MCWHIRTER (Chairman),
The Freedom Association,
35 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1
January 30.

From Lord Mayhew

Sir, I am not a hardship case, and am not complaining; but when I left the House of Commons in 1974, my index-linked pension, based on 27 years' service (including five years as a minister) in 1980, was £4,034 (payable from 1980). It is now £10,118.

I was astonished when MPs recently voted themselves pension increases for their service before 1983, but withheld the increase from former members who had served the same years and paid the same pensions contributions.

I think the less MPs have to do with their emoluments, the better.
Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW,
House of Lords,
January 31.

From Sir Laurie Magnus

Sir, Many people of quality decide to keep out of politics simply because it does not pay well enough. Prosperity for self and family, which can only be earned elsewhere, comes first.

Some will always say that public service should be more important than money. They echo predominantly Conservative thinkers of the 19th century who felt that MPs should not be paid at all.

But let us not lose the chance to attract greater quality into public life by restricting salaries. If any MP does not wish to accept a pay rise, he or she can always return to the Paymaster General.

Yours faithfully,
LAURIE MAGNUS,
Flat 8, 44 Lower Sloane Street, SW1,
February 1.

From Mr Peter Le Cheminant

Sir, It is to be hoped that the implementation of any increase in the pay of MPs which results from the present clamour will be deferred until after the next election. Otherwise the main impact will be to boost the pensions of the substantial number of present MPs who will not return to the House next time round.

Yours etc,
PETER LE CHEMINANT,
23 Weyley Avenue,
Burgham, Guildford, Surrey,
January 31.

From Dr P. J. Fabricius

Sir, The National Health Service has a ready precedent to solve the question of MPs' pay. A realistic salary should be set for those MPs who spend the whole of their time working for Parliament. Every MP should be required to declare in confidence all other sources of earned income.

Those who earn more than 10 per cent of their parliamentary salary from other sources should forfeit an appropriate proportion of the parliamentary salary, as do maximum part-time NHS consultants, despite being required still to devote "substantially the whole of their time" to the NHS.

I have the honour to remain,
Sir, your obedient servant,
P. J. FABRICIUS,
3 Rowhills Close, Farnham, Surrey,
January 31.

From Sir Anthony Beaumont-Dark

Sir, The view that many senior MPs, who should know better, put around that if you paid MPs twice as much you would get better MPs is, at the kindest, nonsense. The opposite in my view is the case: all you will end up with is many more young MPs who have done nothing with their lives except be professional.

Your obedient servant,
ANTHONY BEAUMONT-DARK,
124 Lady Byron Lane,
Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands,
February 1.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

The need for a long-term solution to university funding

From the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham

Sir, Simon Jenkins ("Dons must do or die", January 31) hits the nail on the head.

In the last 50 years or so our universities have established a high reputation internationally and have generally provided a high-quality education. At last, people are realising that this reputation is under threat. Student numbers have increased dramatically whilst the unit of funding for teaching each student has been cut by 28 per cent over the last six years.

We cannot reverse this situation by merely tinkering with the funding system: it needs a totally fresh approach and a new financial mechanism. The only way to break through the present impasse is for students to pay a share of tuition costs.

Students should be supported by some kind of income-contingent loan scheme, the level and timespan of repayment being dependent on the level of earnings. Other measures would have to be taken to protect the less well off: the student might have a voucher provided by the State giving a basic sum of taxpayers' money, and would supplement this with a direct payment backed, perhaps, by a loan.

In this way more resources will be made available to improve the quality of service: the student can choose the university which most suits his interests and the resulting mechanism would free universities substantially from the present bureaucratic system of government funding.

Universities should then move to charging full-cost fees, the level of which will vary according to the nature and quality of the course. Centres of academic excellence in different fields will emerge and will charge higher fees. Demand will begin to be market-led.

Much may be learnt from our experiences at Buckingham. We are the only independent university in Britain

with no direct taxpayers' support. Our fees reflect the costs of providing a high-quality service and personal attention. After 20 years of existence we are in a position to encourage other universities to secure greater independence and to pursue a new funding system for the next century.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD LUCE,
Vice-Chancellor,
The University of Buckingham,
Buckingham MK18 1EG,
February 1.

From Mr Robert Jackson,
MP for Wantage (Conservative)

Sir, The universities should go ahead with their proposed £300 "registration" or "quality maintenance" charge (report, January 30), but they would be well advised to describe it simply as a "fee" and to think of it as initiating a long-term strategy.

So long as the universities' move looks like a calculated pre-election political manoeuvre the Government is entitled to be irritated, and the necessary dialogue between it and the universities about this matter will not work as it should. (Incidentally, neither the universities nor the Government should over-estimate the electoral effects of what the universities are contemplating: the middle-class electorate is more realistic than either perhaps credits.)

The financial problem to which the proposed fee is a solution is a long-term one which will not go away with a change of government: the vice-chancellors should pay attention to what Labour is saying about taxes. Taxpayers simply cannot afford to give a university education to 30 per cent of our young people of the style which it provided for only 10 per cent of them little more than a decade ago.

To work as a long-term policy the private fee needs to be backed up by legislation to extend the student loans scheme to enable it to be used to ad-

vance money for fees. This is why the universities need to talk seriously to the Government, and the Government should listen.

Meanwhile those die-hards among the vice-chancellors who think that £300 a year will choke off demand from potential students should recall that the introduction of student loans coincided with an explosion of demand for higher education. There is also something odd about the idea that a university education might be worthless to a student at a price above £0. It might be asked, anyway, whether such a student would be sufficiently motivated to benefit from a university course.

Yours etc,
ROBERT JACKSON,
House of Commons,
January 31.

From Professor Sir Graham Hills

Sir, The vice-chancellors may be unwise to settle for the stop-gap palliative of top-up fees before securing a better basis for their long-term security. At the heart of the matter is the lack of any serious consideration of the true costs and true benefits of higher education.

Who are the customers? Who are the beneficiaries? Should all the beneficiaries contribute to the cost? Is the Government a provider, a customer or a regulator?

Past inquiries have led to the conclusion that government and students are both customers, and that they need to negotiate economic prices with their suppliers, the universities. That is the way to common sense, a proper set of values, quality control, diversity, and an economic basis for extending the scope of higher education.

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM HILLS,
Sunnyside of Threepwood,
Laigh Threepwood, Beith, Ayrshire,
January 30.

Room for savings on back pain bill

From Professor Michael Rosen and Professor G. Waddell

Sir, Backache is a 20th-century health-care disaster and there is now a revolution in back care. Less than one in 500 (0.2 per cent) of back problems need surgery: even slipped discs usually get better without an operation.

As our excellent series of articles on "Beating back pain" (January 22 and 23) makes clear, doctors are beginning to accept that bed rest is bad. With simple measures to control the pain, and staying active, back pain will usually get better.

If more help is needed to control the pain, then the patient should see a physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor for manipulation. However, some people do not get better and need more help. Time is then vital: once off work for six months, there is only a 50 per cent chance of returning to work. At present, patients may wait months for surgical consultations and high-tech investigations, only to be told that

there is no surgical problem.

A report last year by the Clinical Standards Advisory Group (CSAG) recommended that resources should be shifted to primary care in order to provide early active management and rehabilitation. There is strong scientific evidence for such an approach, and the group's recommendations were supported by the Government, but little is being done to implement our report.

Backache is now costing the UK £6 billion a year; and there is potential for considerable savings. Most NHS services and treatment for back pain are no longer acceptable. There is an urgent need for action, in the form of education and pilot studies, to develop a more effective service.

Yours etc,
MICHAEL ROSEN
(Chairman, Clinical Standards Advisory Group),
GORDON WADDELL
(Orthopaedic surgeon, member, CSAG),
45 Hollybush Road, Cardiff,
January 29.

Haunting smell

From Mr Ron Smith

Sir, Mr B. J. Francis suggests (letter, January 17) that the ghostly smell identified by visitors to this house, which was once Julia Margaret Cameron's home, may somehow be associated with Julia's use of the chemicals for her photography. I myself am not of that opinion: several of us who have experienced the smell (report, January 9) describe it as similar to that of rotting herrings.

The smell only recurs when classical music is played. The ante-room where it occurs most strongly is adjacent to the large entrance foyer where Julia and her guests danced and enjoyed her solaces: it has red quarries on the floor and heavily plastered brick walls with no cracks.

The most recent recurrence was on February 11, 1995, when we were playing a tape of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. The smell arose shortly after the music started and lasted until a crew from a cable TV company arrived to do some filming about Julia and the freak happening. They had requested the music for background purposes and we were testing prior to their arrival.

We would dearly love a rational explanation. For the record, it is not the electric lampholders and not the drains.

Yours sincerely,
RON SMITH
(Chairman, Council of Management),
The Julia Margaret Cameron Trust,
Dimbola Lodge, Terrace Lane,
Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight,
January 24.

Wolves in the wild

From Mr Roger Panaman

Sir, As part of our project to reintroduce wolves to the Scottish Highlands, the Highland Wolf Fund, we often need to dispel the myth that wolves need forests (Scotland's company of wolves", Weekend, January 27).

They live in all kinds of habitat except tropical rain forest and the most arid desert: they even live in the Arctic.

We do not need to wait for reforestation before we can restore wolves to the Highlands, but we do acknowledge that some people's negative perceptions must change.

Fortunately, a public reappraisal of wolves is slowly coming about as the result of research on wolf behaviour and ecology.

Yours sincerely,
ROGER PANAMAN,
Carnivore Wildlife Trust,
35 Church Street, Kidlington, Oxford,
January 30.

Business letters, page 25

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Pay as you view

From Mr S. R. Lancelyn Green

Sir, It's a deal! I will gladly pay £5 for each complete opera I watch on television if Mr Amos (letter, January 30) see also letters, January 27) will pay £5 for each snooker game he watches. That's fair isn't it?

My annual bill will be about £15 or up to £25 in a good year. I wonder what his will be?

Yours faithfully,
S. R. LANCELYN GREEN,
Poulton Hall,
Poulton Lancelyn,
Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside,
January 30.

From Miss Margaret Yates

Sir, I am very happy to pay £12 a month to Cable London, for its enterprising Performance channel offering a nightly selection of opera, ballet, classical music and jazz. As I can no longer afford opera house prices, even in the gods, and, like many other elderly people, no longer wish to go out at night, I consider it excellent value.

Yours sincerely,
MARGARET YATES,
27 The Glade, Winchmore Hill, N21,
January 30.

Sports letters, page 37

Bishops' residences

From Mr William E. Bridge

Sir, The letter from the Bishop of Exeter (January 30; see also letters, January 18) highlights the terrible waste that such expensive episcopal residences represent.

Like any other diocese Exeter must have many underused church buildings and halls which would be quite suitable for the business, entertainment and hospitality that he outlined.

Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM E. BRIDGE,
175 Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent.

Lottery and charities

From Mr Robert Ashby

Sir, In addition to lottery grants for which charities must apply (letters, January 19, 29), perhaps Camelot should hold an Ernie-style weekly draw of a charity registration number? The winning charity might be awarded £10,000 to its core fund, taken from Camelot's profit.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT ASHBY
(Executive director),
British Humanist Association,
47 Theobald's Road, WC1.

Here today . . .

From Mr Winston Graham

Sir, Last Friday, January 26, a "snow shower" lasting seven hours, dumped at least six inches of snow on this area of Sussex. Temperature at the time was 25F. Saturday (temp 27F max), in spite of more light snow early, the snow began to go. By Sunday at 2pm (temp 32F max) it was almost gone. No dripping from the roofs: minimal rise of level in greenhouse water butt; wind cold but not sufficient to blow snow away.

So somehow the snow did not melt: it evaporated. How?

Yours etc,
WINSTON GRAHAM,
Abbotswood House,
Buxted, East Sussex,
February 1.

Calling all agents

From Mr Noel Johnson

Sir, I note with interest the item in today's issue about the revival of *Dick Barton, Special Agent* and the announcement of some casting.

It would have been courteous if the BBC had at least given me first refusal of the part.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
NOEL JOHNSON,
(The original Dick Barton Special Agent, 1946-49),
4 Britway Court, Britway Road,
Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan,
January 29.

Lost in translation?
From Dr Robert M. Bruce-Chwatt
Sir, The caption to the portrait on your back page today of a "cow" marooned by flash floods in southern France appears to be bull.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT BRUCE-CHWATT,
York Lodge,
1 York Road, Richmond, Surrey,
January 31.

COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK
February 1: The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh were represented by the Lord Somerleyton (Master of the Horse) at the Memorial Service for the Viscountess Boyle (Lord in Waiting and Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire) which was held in St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, this afternoon.

The Prince of Wales was represented by Mr Gerald Ward.
Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, and The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester were represented by Major Nicholas Barne.

The Duke of Kent was represented by Mr Andrew Palmer.
Princess Alexandra, the Hon Lady Ogilvy was represented by Mrs Peter Allen.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
February 1: The Princess Royal this morning departed Sea Lion Island for Fox Bay East where Her Royal Highness attended a Smoke in the Community Centre with West Falkland residents.

The Princess Royal afterwards departed Fox Bay for Hill Cove and attended a Luncheon with other West Falkland residents. Her Royal Highness this afternoon visited Port Howard and attended a Smoke at Port Howard.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
February 1: The Prince of Wales, Colonel-in-Chief, The Royal Regiment of Wales, received Lieutenant Colonel Peter Davies upon relinquishing his appointment as Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Aitken upon assuming the appointment.

KENSINGTON PALACE
February 1: The Princess of Wales, Patron, British Lung Foundation, this evening attended a Gala Performance of *La Bohème* at the Royal Albert Hall, London SW7.

YORK HOUSE
February 1: The Duke of Kent, President, this evening attended the Engineering Council's Unification Launch dinner, at the Institution of Civil Engineers, Great George Street, London SW1.

The Queen has been graciously pleased to appoint Mr Michael Uccello to be a Sergeant-at-Arms to Her Majesty in succession to Mr David Walker.



Philip Hughes, left, the new chairman of the trustees of the National Gallery, with Raymond Seitz, former American Ambassador to Britain, who has just become a trustee. They are standing in front of one of Paolo Uccello's large-scale panel decorations depicting *The Battle of San Romano* (1454-57)

Today's royal engagements

The Duke of Kent, as president, will attend the Engineering Council forum at Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre at 10.00.

Today's events

The Queen's Life Guard mounts at Horse Guards at 11.00.

Premium Bonds

The £1 million prize in the Premium Bond draw for February was won with bond number 345 83724. The winner, who lives in Co Antrim, has a holding of 15,000.

Luncheon

HM Government
Mr Malcolm Rifkind, QC, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, was the host at a luncheon given by Her Majesty's Government yesterday at 1 Carlton Gardens in honour of Mr Shimon Peres, Prime Minister of Israel.

Reception

HM Government
Mr John M. Taylor, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Competition and Consumer Affairs, was the host yesterday at a reception given by Her Majesty's Government at Lancaster House to mark the 20th anniversary of the National Exhibition Centre.

Dinners

Frutiger's Company
Mr M.J. Tanguy, Master of the Frutiger's Company, assisted by the Waitress, presided at the annual dinner held last night at Plasterer's Hall. During the evening he presented the Ridley Silver Medal to Dr J.D. Quinlan for distinguished services to fruit growing. Sir Graham Dorey, Balf of Glenurquh, Lord Justice Staughton and Mr D.G. Hope-Mason also spoke.

The Fruiterers' Company
The following have been elected officers of the Fruiterers' Company for the ensuing year:
Master: Mr M.J. Tanguy, Upper Wardens: Mr D. Tullett, and Mr John Leighton-Cox at the

Birthdays today

Mr Roger Brooke, chairman, Candover Investments, 65; Mr Ken Bruce, broadcaster, 45; Sir Gordon Brown, former Chief Justice of the Bahamas, 83; the Earl of Clarendon, 63; Dr Macdonald Crichley, neurologist, 96; Mr Andrew Davis, conductor, 52; the Rev Dr Victor de Waal, former Dean of Canterbury, 67; Sir Robert Douglas, founder Douglas Group of Companies, 97; Lord Eamonn, 51; Mr Abbas Eban, Israeli politician, 81; Dr Tony Flower, economist, 45; Sir Norman Fowler, MP, 58; M Valery Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France, 70; Mr Hughie Green, broadcaster, 76; Mr H.V. Hughes, former Principal, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, 70; Mr David Jason, actor, 56; Mr David Jones, chief executive, Next, 53; Sir Chris Keswick, chairman, Hambros Bank, 56; Dame Alix Meynell, former H.M. servant, 93; Miss Elaine Smith, actress, 69.

Royal Warrant Holders

Colonel Christopher Pickup has been appointed Secretary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association in succession to Commander Hugh Faulkner who has retired.

Appointment

Mr Jim McCulloch has been appointed Ambassador to Iceland from mid-May in succession to Mr Michael Howe who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service.

Latest wills

Mr John Greville Branton, of Netherthorpe, Cleveland, left estate valued at £5,502,009 net.
He left a number of bequests, including real property and life interests in £1,500,000, and the residue of his estate to his wife, the late Mrs Branton's daughter, Mrs Branton.

Mr John Frederick Prosser, of Cambridge, classical scholar and author, left estate valued at £1,043,877 net.
He left £25,000 to the Royal Society, £10,000 to the Royal Society of Medicine, and the residue to the Cancer Research Campaign.

Mr Arthur Sidney Thorne, of London SW17, left estate valued at £1,353,387 net.
He left £25,000 to personal legacies, £10,000 to the R.N.M. and the residue to the Cancer Research Campaign.

Mr John Raymond Barretto, of East Finchley, London N2, left estate valued at £3,197,397 net.
He left £10,000 each to the British Red Cross Society, the Salvation Army, £500 each to the Fire Service, National Fire Brigades, and the British Legion, and the residue to his wife, Mrs Barretto.

Mr James Lawson Richards, of London, left estate valued at £3,749,175 net.
He left £10,000 each to the British Red Cross Society, the Salvation Army, £500 each to the Fire Service, National Fire Brigades, and the British Legion, and the residue to his wife, Mrs Richards.

Mr Albert Goodwin, of Yeovil, Somerset, Professor of Modern History at the University of Manchester, 1953-69, left estate valued at £97,163 net.
He left his effects and such money as he could transfer on his death to his wife, Mrs Goodwin, and the residue to his daughter, Mrs Goodwin.

Mr Mary Macfie, of Ely, Cambridgeshire, left estate valued at £1,322,382 net.
She left her effects and such money as she could transfer on her death to her husband, Mr Macfie, and the residue to her daughter, Mrs Macfie.

Recent estates include (net, before tax):
The Hon Douglas Angus Brazier-Craigh, of Winchester, £1,441,282.
Mr John George Walpole, of South Elmham St Margaret, Suffolk, £1,410,605.

Memorial services

Viscountess Boyle
The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh were represented by the Lord Somerleyton at a service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Viscountess Boyle held yesterday at St Laurence's, Ludlow.

The Prince of Wales was represented by Mr Gerald Ward, Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester by Major Nicholas Barne, the Duke of Kent by Mr Andrew Palmer and Princess Alexandra by Mrs Peter Allen.

The Rev Dr Brian Curlew and the Bishop of Ludlow officiated. The Rev David Good, the Archdeacon of Salop and Mr Simon Kenyon-Slaney, representing St John Ambulance, read the prayers. Viscountess Boyle, son, the Hon Mrs Caroline Banks, daughter, Georgina Banks, granddaughter, and Mr Richard Hamilton-Russell, read the lessons. Sir Peter Gadsden gave an address. The Bishop of Hereford pronounced the blessing.

The Lord Chancellor was represented by Mr Alan Barnish, Clerk of the Shropshire Lieutenancy and Chief Executive of Shropshire

Church news

Archdeacon of Tonbridge
Canon Judith Rose, Acting Archdeacon of Tonbridge, diocese Rochester, is to be Archdeacon of Tonbridge, succeeding the Ven Richard Mason who has retired.

Appointments
The Rev Laurence Blaney, Rector, St George's, St Albans, has been appointed to be Vicar, St Dunstan, St Albans (Southwark).
The Rev Paul Burridge-Butler, Curate, Handsworth Woodhouse (Sheffield), to be Vicar, St Dunstan, St Albans (Southwark).
The Rev Christopher Byers, Team Rector, Thamestead Team Ministry (Southwark), to be also an Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral.

The Rev Peter Clark, Vicar, Christ Church and St Stephen, Battersea, and Rural Dean of Battersea (Southwark), to be also an Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral.
The Rev Gwyn Clement, Assistant Curate, St James and St John, Ripon, to be Vicar, St Dunstan, St Albans (Southwark).
The Rev Leslie Collinson, Curate, Corston St Andrew (Norwich), to be Team Vicar, Barbary Team Ministry (Southwark).
The Rev Gary Coombe, Priest-in-charge, Foots Cray, to be Rector, Foots Cray (Rochester).

The Rev John Day, Vicar, St Margaret, Thornbury (Bradford), to be Vicar, St Mary, Whitby (Ripon).
The Rev Stephen Edwards, to be Chaplain of HM Prison, Maidstone (Canterbury).
The Rev John Ewing, Vicar, St Saviour, Southend-on-Sea (Chelmsford), to be Vicar, Northham Team Ministry (Exeter).
The Rev Clare Garrett, Curate, Ewias Harold Team Ministry, to be Curate, Tisbury (Hereford).
The Rev Marion Goddard, Acting Assistant Chaplain, Greenwith District Hospital, to be Team Vicar, William Temple Church, Thamestead Team Ministry (Southwark).
The Rev Christopher Green, Head of Religious Studies, RNIB New College, Worcester, to be Vicar, All Saints, Cliftonville (Southwell).
The Rev Janet Hooton, to be Deacon (NSM), Thame Team Ministry (Southwark).
The Rev Dr Jonathan Triggs, Vicar, St Thomas, Oakwood, to be Vicar St Michael, Highgate (London).

Anniversaries

Holly, singer and songwriter, died in an air crash, near Mason City, Iowa, 1959; Bertrand Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, mathematician and philosopher, Plas Penrhyn, Merionethshire, 1970; George Whipple, pathologist, Nobel laureate 1934, New York, 1976.
Ireland was represented in the British Parliament for the first time, 1801.
Greece declared war on Turkey, 1878.
The state funeral of Queen Victoria, 1901.
Major-General Idi Amin declared himself the absolute ruler of Uganda, 1971.
The British Embassy in Dublin was besieged and burnt down, 1972.

Legal appointment

Mr Alistair Bruno Issard-Davies to be Circuit Judge, assigned to the South Eastern Circuit.

PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 1982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

BMD'S: 0171 782 7272
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

DEATHS
ABEILL - On 29th January, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

BIRTHS
ABU JABER - On January 28th at the Portland Hospital, to Aida and Hassan, a daughter, Aida Jaber. Aida Jaber, a wife and mother.

BURFOOT - On 28th January, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

GLANVILLE - On 31st January, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

HUGHES - On January 30th, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

HUME-KENDALL - On January 30th, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

LOOPER DAVIES - To Steve and Diane the safe and sound arrival of a son, Iain Lawrence, brother to Gemma, at 11.45 am on 31st January 1996 at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

SMITH - On January 27th, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

TYREMAN - On January 10th at the Portland Hospital, to Elizabeth and Thomas, a daughter, Elizabeth Tyreman. Elizabeth Tyreman, a wife and mother.

WARD - On January 27th, 1996, at 82 years, died peacefully at home. Deceased was a devoted husband and father. Burial at 11.45 am on Friday 9th February at St. Andrew's Church, London. Family flowers only. Donations to St. Andrew's Church, London. Tel: 01223-591220.

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OBITUARIES

SIR JOHN CARMICHAEL

Sir John Carmichael, KBE, civil servant, businessman and golfer, died on January 6 aged 85. He was born on April 22, 1910.

JOHN CARMICHAEL returned to his native Scotland from Sudan in the late 1960s. The experience he had gained in Africa as a civil servant and financial and economic adviser to the first post-independence Sudanese Government made him a welcome addition to the boardrooms of several top British companies. Besides his time at Fisons — where he was chief executive, 1962-66 — he served the fishing, gas, jute and chemical industries.

Carmichael was also a first-class golfer, who played off a single-figure handicap. He could often be seen striding around the Old Course at St Andrews, and won the Royal and Ancient's Jubilee Vase there in 1964. He was captain of the Royal and Ancient, 1974-75.

John Carmichael was born in St Andrews and educated there at Madras College. He graduated from St Andrews University with first class honours in mathematics and physics. He was given his rugby blue, and had a trial for the Scottish team. Although he never won a cap, he was a reserve on 13 occasions.

After a year on a Commonwealth Fellowship at the University of Michigan, he returned to Britain and joined Guardian Assurance. Then in 1936 he decided on a complete change of career. He joined the Sudanese Civil Service, and went out to Sudan, where his duties included a spell as Permanent Under-Secretary to the Ministry of Finance. In that post Carmichael was given a free rein to develop his business skills. He used to joke that, on one occasion during the Second World War, he was involved in selling the entire cotton crop.

Sudan was one of the few African countries to retain the service of some British civil servants after independence. Carmichael stayed on after 1956, and Ismail al-Azhar, the first Prime Minister, later fondly described him as "the white man in our woodpile". But in 1959 Carmichael returned to Scotland and bought a house at Balmullo, just outside St Andrews. There he cultivated a handsome garden, full of all the known



species of heather in Scotland. He was appointed to the UK delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations and the following year, 1960, joined Fisons as a non-executive director, initially as chairman of its pest-control subsidiary in Sudan.

Two years later he was made chief executive of Fisons, succeeding Avon Wormald. Carmichael brought in George Burton as his deputy chief executive, and, while Burton concentrated on overseas trade, Carmichael turned his mind to the home market.

Wormald had already begun the process of diversification of Fisons interests, and Carmichael continued the process. For the past century, the Fisons market had been largely UK-based. Carmichael made it more of an international player, and he spent a good deal of time abroad, travelling with Burton to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya and Uganda. By-products of the Fisons fertiliser

range were introduced, and included weedkillers, shampoos and specialised food products. While other British companies struggled through a lean period, Fisons remained in healthy shape throughout the mid-1960s. After George Burton had succeeded as chief executive in 1966, Carmichael became deputy chairman for six years, and then reverted to his old status on the board as non-executive director until 1980.

Fisons was one in a growing number of board appointments. By the late 1960s, Carmichael had been brought onto the board of Jute Industries (renamed Sidlaw Industries in 1969), and groomed by Sir William Walker, the outgoing chairman, as his apparent heir. He was appointed chairman in 1970 and remained in the post for the next decade.

Carmichael's main achievement at Sidlaw was to transform it from an old-fashioned textile business, based in

Dundee, to a major provider of services to the nascent oil industry in Scotland. When he arrived, jute, the product on which the business's fortunes were founded, was increasingly being provided not by Dundee companies but by those in Bangladesh and Calcutta. Diversification was the only option if the company was not to sink with the rest of the industry.

In 1972 Carmichael organised the lease (subsequently the purchase) of reclaimed land within the port area of Peterhead, north of Aberdeen. The company began to organise the logistics of the management of these ports, and so got involved, at just the right moment, in North Sea oil. The period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s was one of substantial growth for Sidlaw, much of it attributable to Carmichael's timely initiative.

He was also chairman of the Herring Advisory Board, 1960-63, and deputy chairman of the Independent Television Authority, 1960-63. By the mid-1970s he had reduced his commitments in the South and was concentrating his energies in Scotland. He served on the boards of the Royal Bank of Scotland, Abbey National, and the Scottish Development Advisory Board. He was appointed KBE in 1955.

During his period as the Rector's assessor at St Andrews University, 1965-68, he worked with such dear friends as C. P. Snow, Sir Leslie Constantine and Lord Boothby.

Carmichael was a softly-spoken man, with a disarming, lopsided smile. He enjoyed family life, and every year took his family on holiday, sometimes less successfully than others. One year, he rented a caravan with which to tour Scotland. He reached as far as Speyside, not much north of St Andrews, before discovering that he had little idea how to reverse the cumbersome vehicle, let alone park it. Instead, he booked the entire family into the local hotel for the entire holiday.

Those who knew him well suspected that he may never have had any real intention of venturing further north than Speyside. With many good golf courses at hand, there seemed little reason to.

He is survived by his wife Cecilia, whom he married in 1940, and by one son and three daughters.

JOHN EDLIN

John Edlin, journalist, died in Johannesburg after a stroke on January 29 aged 50. He was born in Invercargill, New Zealand, on August 21, 1945.



TO THE despair of his editors — and to the delight of his readers — John Edlin decided early on in his 33-year-long career as a journalist in Africa that real stories could be gathered just as easily in bars and shebeens as by more orthodox means. But, despite achieving cult status as a heroic drinker and featuring as a thinly disguised hell-raising character in a number of excellent novels set in Africa, John Edlin always remained a fine reporter. From the Congolese uprising in 1964, when he tracked down the French mercenary leader Bob Denard and other notorious soldiers of fortune, Edlin chronicled with distinction the colonial and civil wars in Angola and Mozambique, the Rhodesian bush war and the collapse of old Cold War rivalries.

For more than three decades, he traversed independent Africa making friends and enemies of some of the most influential politicians; he was expelled from seven countries and jailed in at least two.

He witnessed mass starvation in Ethiopia in 1985 and once described how he had watched doctors marking the foreheads of children who could be saved. He asked Mother Teresa what could be done to help the others. "What are you going to do?" she said. Edlin considered the question over a beer or two, and in six months had provided start-up funds for an orphanage for 600 children outside Addis Ababa.

Divorced but childless, he had earlier funded the educa-

tion of Moroccan orphans after a reporting assignment on the Saharan war and supported a children's home in Zimbabwe.

Edlin provided the novelist David Pownall with the model for a raucous young reporter from New Zealand, John Pyper, in his two novels set in Zambia, *The Raining Tree* and *African Horse*.

Returning to southern Africa from Ghana in 1972, he worked for British newspapers and Reuters before becoming a full-time Associated Press correspondent in Rhodesia in 1976. At the time of his stroke on the dance floor of a nightclub in Dakar, Edlin had completed a year-long assignment teaching African journalists in Senegal.

He is survived by his mother and two brothers.

BRIGADIER BILL VICKERS

Brigadier Bill Vickers, DSO, OBE, died on January 25 aged 82. He was born on January 19, 1914.

THE challenge of commanding an infantry battalion other than one of one's own regiment is always formidable. The task faced by Bill Vickers, a tall, raw-boned man of rather gaunt aspect, was especially so. After 22 years of service exclusively with British troops, he was appointed to command 2nd Battalion 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), whose stocky, tough but unfailingly humorous soldiers stood only as high as his shoulder. This was in Hong Kong in January 1956 but the battalion was due to move to Malaya, where the eight-year-old communist insurgency still smouldered on.

Vickers commanded 2nd/2nd "Gurkhas", as they were invariably known, during two years of intensive operations against the residual hardcore of the communist terrorists, initially in Negeri Sembilan state in the south-

west of the Malay peninsula. By that stage of the campaign, the tide had turned against the insurgents, thanks to the far-sighted policies of the successive Directors of Operations, Generals Sir Harold Briggs and Sir Gerald Templer.

During the second half of 1956, Vickers concentrated on the Kuala Pilah district, where operations by "A" company of the battalion, commanded by Major Grahame Vivian, acting on Special Branch information and intelligence from surrendered terrorists, killed or captured several of the key communist leaders in the area.

The following year saw 2nd/2nd Gurkhas operating in the neighbouring state of Johore, where a high proportion of the predominantly Chinese population persisted in their support of the terrorists still in the jungle. Accompanied by a Special Branch officer and only a small escort, Vickers trekked into the interior on four occasions to negotiate personally the surrender of terrorists. He was mentioned in dispatches in 1957 and the



citation for his award of the DSO in 1958 read: "Lieutenant-Colonel Vickers has added to the renown and fighting traditions of his regiment and proved himself to be a fearless, skilled and determined leader. Inspired by his leadership, his men achieved many successes in jungle operations against a wary, treacherous and dangerous enemy."

Arthur William Neville Langston Vickers was born in London, the son of William C. L. Vickers, an electrical en-

gineer. He was educated at Clifton, which represented at cricket, rugby, fives and boxing, and entered the Royal Military College, Sandhurst via a cadet scholarship in 1932. He was commissioned into the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in 1934.

After prewar service in India and Burma with the 2nd KOYLI, Vickers was recalled to accompany the 1st Battalion to France in 1939. Later, as part of the 15th Infantry Brigade, the same battalion took part in the ill-fated British intervention in Norway. Virtually without air support, the brigade was landed near the Aandalsnes fiord on April 18, 1940, only to be withdrawn 12 days later in the face of the German advance northwards up the Gudbrands Valley from Oslo, strongly supported by the Luftwaffe.

After staff college in 1941 and appointments in England, he returned to regimental service as second-in-command of 4th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry in time for the Normandy invasion. He was wounded and evacuated, only to return as soon as he had

recovered, this time in command of the 1st Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment in the 43rd Wessex Division, which saw stiff fighting in Holland and Germany in the winter of 1944-45.

He was appointed OBE in 1945 in recognition of his war service and posted to the Staff College, Camberley, as an instructor in 1948. Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War, he was appointed AA & QMG of the 1st Commonwealth Division. The years 1951-52 were the grimmest of this gruelling war, during which Vickers was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the United States Bronze Star. A brief period with 2nd KOYLI was followed by a promotion to lieutenant-colonel, a period on the Allied Staff in Berlin and then command of 2nd/2nd Gurkha Rifles.

Following his successful period in command, he was promoted colonel and served on the Nato staff of Allied Forces Central Europe and as an instructor at the RAF Staff College, before being appointed Inspector of Intelligence and Commandant of the Joint Services Intelligence Centre in the rank of brigadier. He retired from the Army in 1967 but remained in government service, engaged in security work, until 1970.

For eight years he served as general secretary of the Soil Association, working with E. F. Schumacher and Lady Eve Balfour. For many years during his retirement he was an active member of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Air-men's Families Association, but was able to find time to play single-figure handicap golf and local cricket in and around Harleston in Norfolk, where he had made his home.

He is survived by his wife Joan, whom he married in 1939, and by their two sons and two daughters.

James Holland, OBE, one of the designers of the 1951 Festival of Britain, died on January 7 aged 90. He was born in Gillingham, Kent, on September 19, 1905.



HIS students will remember James Holland as a fine teacher, his colleagues as a gifted painter, illustrator and designer, his family and friends as a man of conscience — but history will remember him for his major contribution to the 1951 Festival of Britain.

Born in Kent, James Sylvester Holland was the son of a naval blacksmith and never lost his love of the sea. After going to school at the Mathematical School, Rochester, and studying painting at the Rochester School of Art, where he returned later as a governor, he won a rare painting scholarship to the Royal College of Art in 1924. His tutor was Paul Nash and contemporaries there included Henry Moore, with whom Holland worked at one time, and the Canadian painter James Boswell. He and Boswell became lifelong friends, and together they made a number of trips to France, where Holland held his first exhibition before he graduated.

Leaving the Royal College of Art, Holland was immediately offered an art directorship with Foote Cone & Belding, working on a number of top advertising accounts such as Shell, Imperial Airways and the Empire Marketing Board. He went on to establish himself as a freelance artist and was much in demand.

With war on the horizon, Holland, together with Boswell and another artist James Fittion, set up the influential Artists' International Association, a pacifist organisation of artists. During the war Holland worked at the Ministry of Information, mainly on exhibition design, and it was here that he acquired the skills that were to equip him for his

job in the design group of the 1951 Festival of Britain. He joined the team in 1948 at a time of rationing and acute shortage of materials.

The Ministry of Works had looked at the South Bank site and declared it an impossible task. The design team not only took on the task but decided that each should design a section of the site. With his maritime background it was natural that Holland should choose "Sea and Ships". To his further delight, the First Lord of the Admiralty offered him the aircraft carrier *Campania* to tour Britain as a floating exhibition hall of which Holland was the designer in charge. The Festival design team met formally at least twice a week and then afterwards for informal suppers. Each member of the group had specific responsibilities but all the major decisions were the group's joint effort.

That the ambitious exhibition opened on time, was so well attended and was so

much fun was in no small part due to the experience and skill of the design team, who remained as close friends at the completion of the job as when they began. When the exhibition closed Holland was appointed OBE.

He was president of the Chartered Society of Designers, 1960-61, and shortly afterwards he was appointed group art director at Erwin Wasey Advertising. In 1963 he accepted the offer to return to teaching as head of graphic design at Birmingham Polytechnic. In 1971, on his retirement from Birmingham, Holland became education officer at the Chartered Society of Designers and he used his experience to help design courses to become more professional. During this period he wrote *Minerva at Fifty*, a history of the society.

Holland is survived by his second wife Jacqueline, two daughters from his first marriage and a son and a daughter from his second.

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LAWRENCE AND HIS LEGEND

RICHARD ALDINGTON: *Lawrence of Arabia*. A Biographical Enquiry. 480pp Collins, 25.

The title of the French edition of Mr Aldington's book — *Lawrence l'homme* — more frankly acknowledges its character than the sub-title of the English: a "biographical enquiry". He has searched the already published literature by and about Lawrence for every scrap of material that can be turned to his victim's discredit.

Lawrence is vulnerable to this kind of attack. A great popular legend was built up for him in the early 1920s, and inflated with anecdotes many of which today seem not only false but foolish. Mr Aldington adduces evidence to show that Lawrence, while publicly deprecating the growth of the legend, privately connived at it. In truth, vanity of the kind that "bucked into the limelight", was Lawrence's besetting weakness; some of his warmest admirers have acknowledged it. He himself was conscious of it, castigated himself for it, and could not escape from it. But no one who ever sat up into the small hours while Lawrence pined up tales of fantastic adventure, and noticed the look of slight disdain that came into his eyes if the listener seemed to be accepting the improbabilities too literally, will turn to the Seven Pillars of Wisdom for a precise record of the course of the desert campaign.

It does not follow, however, that the military value of the Arab revolt was insignificant and the

ON THIS DAY

February 2, 1955

T. E. Lawrence, *Lawrence of Arabia*, became a legend in his lifetime, but there were always those who regarded his accounts of his career with some scepticism. Among these was the poet and novelist Richard Aldington.

credit for such success as it achieved stolen by Lawrence from other men, which is Mr Aldington's thesis. We have the testimony of Colonel Sefton, Staff Officer with the Arab forces, that "Lawrence took the limelight from those of us professional soldiers who were fortunate enough to serve with him, but never once have I heard a whisper of jealousy. We sensed that we were serving with a man immeasurably our superior."

Mr Aldington opens with what he chooses to call "research", that Lawrence was born out of wedlock — a fact that any of Lawrence's friends, or Lawrence himself in his lifetime, would have given him for the asking.

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NEWS

Tories rule out leadership poll

Senior Conservatives capitalised on improved party morale by formally ruling out any challenge to John Major's leadership before the next general election.

The surprise move came after a series of strong question time performances by the Prime Minister exploiting the Harriet Harman affair, and as the Labour leader himself acknowledged the gains the Tories had reaped. Page 1

Internet shopping boom forecast

The Internet is set to become a multi-billion pound world superstore. Two leading credit card companies announced that they have developed a way of making safe payments over the electronic computer network that encircles the globe. The computer purchase of goods could grow from a £350 million-a-year business to £200 billion. Page 1

Dog judgment

A tearful and acrimonious battle over the ownership of J.J., a potentially valuable Irish setter pup was decided when a judge agreed it could remain with the couple who bought it. Page 1

Paying the piper

Thousands of composers and songwriters have been deprived of income by inefficiency and poor management at the Performing Rights Society, said a government report. Page 1

Missing doctors

Hospital casualty departments are facing the worst shortage of doctors in living memory and are struggling to keep their doors open, said the BMA. Page 2

Firemen killed

Two part-time firemen died inside a blazing house in the former mining village of Blaenau, Gwent, after wrongly being told a young boy was trapped inside. Page 3

Royal accountant

The post of the Keeper of the Privy Purse is going to Michael Peat, a former partner in the accounts, KPMG. Page 5

Church pensions

The Anglican Church's 15 million regular attendees will be expected to dig deeper in their pockets to fund the clergy's pensions under proposals to go before the General Synod next week. Page 6

Wedge-shaped UFO over Manchester

A British Airways jet had a close encounter with an unidentified flying object while landing at Manchester. The Boeing 737 was overtaken at high speed by a wedge-shaped craft. Captain Roger Willis reported that the UFO, emblazoned with small white lights and possibly a black stripe, flashed so close that his co-pilot ducked. Page 1

Dawn exhumation

Police exhumed the body of the man they believe to be Scotland's most notorious killer at dawn in a snow-covered cemetery. Page 7

Harman row

The row over Harriet Harman's decision to send her son to a selective grammar school provoked a series of bitter internal riffs in her constituency Labour party at Camberwell. Page 10

Birthday unrest

Half a million miners chose President Yeltsin's 65th birthday to go on a nationwide strike in an echo of the industrial action that helped to bring down Mikhail Gorbachev. Page 11

Airline dispute

The British Government may mount a legal challenge to the European Commission's decision to let Iberia, Spain's national airline, receive another £440 million in state aid. Page 12

Chirac's charter

President Chirac, on the first state visit to America by a French leader in 12 years, proposed a charter to reform Nato. Page 13

Dole gaffe

Robert Dole's handlers arranged for the 72-year-old presidential candidate to visit a brewery then tried to cancel when they discovered it produced a beer called "Old Man Ale". Page 13



The Princess Royal examines bales of wool at a shearing shed during her visit to Goose Green in the Falkland Islands

BUSINESS

PPP: The private healthcare insurance group is poised to shed its provident status and turn itself into a limited company valued at an estimated £500 million. The move could pave the way for an eventual stockmarket flotation. Page 21

Economy: Production from British manufacturers hit its lowest point for three years, leading to the first decline in manufacturing employment for two years. Page 21

Retail: Stephen Hinchliffe, the Sheffield businessman, is set to expand his empire with the purchase of Saxe and Currys. Page 21

Markets: The FT-SE 100 fell 6.5 to 3752.8. Sterling rose from \$3.3 to \$3.6 after rises from \$1.5110 to \$1.5127 and from DM2.2476 to DM2.2597. Page 24

SPORT

Football: Roger Stanislaus, of Leyton Orient, was banned for one year by the FA after being found guilty of using a performance-enhancing drug. Page 40

Crickets: Australia may forfeit their first game in the World Cup unless the venue is changed from Colombo. A decision will be made early next week. Page 40

Rugby union: For all the talk of expansive play the primary objective for England and Wales in the five nations' championship match at Twickenham tomorrow will be to win. Page 40

Sliding: The Great Britain women's alpine skiing team have returned to the Tyrolean mountains that claimed the life of Kirsteen McGibbon. Page 38

Taste of Bacon: As an unknown self-portrait by Francis Bacon is unveiled to the public for the first time, Richard Cork assesses its importance as a work of art. Page 29

Terrible theatrical death: *Fields of Ambrosia*, an American musical set on Death Row, really is as ghastly as it sounds, says Benedict Nightingale. Page 29

Italy's finest: Crooner Paolo Conte may not be a household name in Britain but he is now bringing his Italian charms to the Barbican. Page 30

Youthful twin track: The chart wannabes Gemini, twin brothers, have found a novel way to get their musical message across to the young: they are taking it into the schools. Page 31

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HOURS OF DARKNESS

Full moon February 4
London 4:51 pm to 7:37 am
Bristol 4:01 pm to 7:47 am
Manchester 4:52 pm to 7:52 am
Penzance 5:17 pm to 7:54 am

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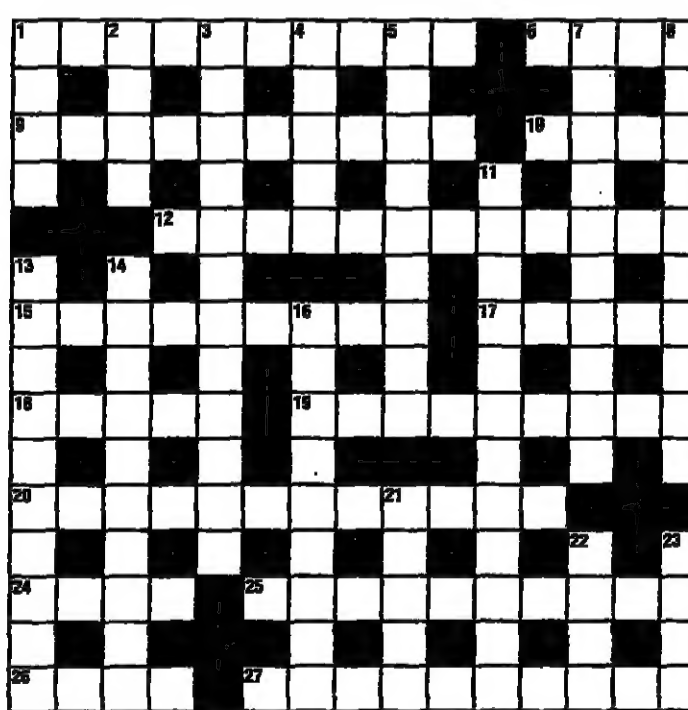
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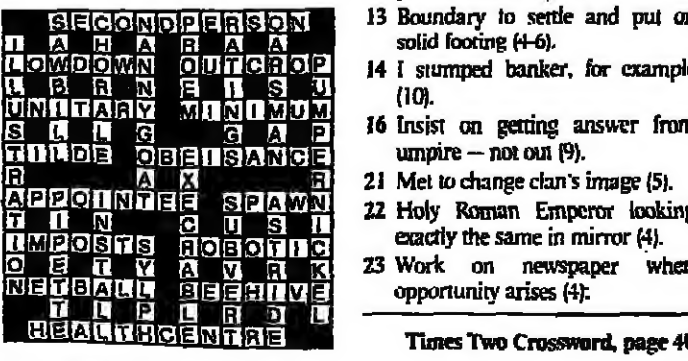
THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,080



ACROSS

- Direction given to people to find place for meeting (10).
- Retired judge gets old-fashioned reward (4).
- Imperative exercise taken by soldiers and politicians (10).
- A point lower — and lighter (4).
- Choice of words in men's curses (12).
- Suspended, perhaps, but under control (2,1,6).
- Better part of Venice ruined (5).
- Breed fish, so to speak (5).
- Phone repair workers, achieving first-class marvellous things (9).
- Stalker in old conflict has to find accommodation for workers (12).
- Informally opposed to taking a drink (4).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,079



Times Two Crossword, page 40

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